

Term Information

Effective Term Spring 2024
Previous Value Autumn 2022

Course Change Information

What change is being proposed? (If more than one, what changes are being proposed?)

Addition of DL instruction

What is the rationale for the proposed change(s)?

We would like to provide both students and instructors the opportunity to take/teach the course in an online format.

What are the programmatic implications of the proposed change(s)?

(e.g. program requirements to be added or removed, changes to be made in available resources, effect on other programs that use the course)?

Increased enrollment by students; ability to find instructors to teach the course

Is approval of the request contingent upon the approval of other course or curricular program request? No

Is this a request to withdraw the course? No

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area	Religious Studies
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org	Comparative Studies - D0518
College/Academic Group	Arts and Sciences
Level/Career	Undergraduate
Course Number/Catalog	2102.02
Course Title	Comparative Sacred Texts
Transcript Abbreviation	Comp Sacred Texts
Course Description	Introduction to religious views of the universe, the supernatural, social organization, ethics, etc., through sacred texts (oral and written) of diverse cultures and historical periods.
Semester Credit Hours/Units	Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course	14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course	Never
Does any section of this course have a distance education component?	Yes
Is any section of the course offered	100% at a distance
<i>Previous Value</i>	<i>No</i>
Grading Basis	Letter Grade
Repeatable	No
Course Components	Lecture, Recitation
Grade Roster Component	Lecture
Credit Available by Exam	No
Admission Condition Course	No
Off Campus	Never
Campus of Offering	Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark, Wooster

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites

Prereq: English 1110, completion of GE Foundation Writing and Information Literacy Course, or equivalent

Previous Value

Prereq: English 1110 (110), or equiv.

Exclusions

Not open to students with credit for CompStd 2102.02.

Previous Value

Not open to students with credit CompStd 2102.02 (202.02).

Electronically Enforced

No

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code

38.0201

Subsidy Level

Baccalaureate Course

Intended Rank

Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior

Requirement/Elective Designation

General Education course:

Literature; Global Studies (International Issues successors); Literary, Visual and Performing Arts

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- Students will learn to analyze, contextualize, and compare the sacred texts of a variety of religious traditions and will become familiar with some basic theories and methods for reading religious literature.

Content Topic List

- Literature
- Religious texts
- Religion
- Culture
- Society

Sought Concurrence

No

Previous Value

COURSE CHANGE REQUEST
2102.02 - Status: PENDING

Last Updated: Vankeerbergen, Bernadette
Chantal
10/12/2023

Attachments

- CST SP2024 DL.pdf: DL Syllabus
(Syllabus. Owner: Arceno, Mark Anthony)
- RS 2102.02 Cover Sheet.pdf: DL Cover Sheet
(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Arceno, Mark Anthony)
- Response to DL review suggestions.pdf: Review response
(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Arceno, Mark Anthony)
- CST Syllabus Finver SP23.pdf: non-DL syllabus for comparative purposes
(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Arceno, Mark Anthony)

Comments

- Please remember to also upload the in-person syllabus so that the subcommittee members can compare both versions. *(by Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal on 09/20/2023 11:03 AM)*

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Arceno, Mark Anthony	09/18/2023 08:29 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Shank, Barry	09/19/2023 01:59 PM	Unit Approval
Revision Requested	Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal	09/20/2023 11:03 AM	College Approval
Submitted	Arceno, Mark Anthony	09/20/2023 02:25 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Shank, Barry	09/20/2023 05:21 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal	10/12/2023 03:12 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins, Mary Ellen Bigler Hanlin, Deborah Kay Hilty, Michael Neff, Jennifer Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal Steele, Rachel Lea	10/12/2023 03:12 PM	ASCCAO Approval

Comparative Sacred Texts Syllabus

CS 2102.02, Spring 2024

Course Overview

- **Course times and location:** This is an **asynchronous** course. That is, there are no required/scheduled meetings; all instruction occurs in Carmen each week.
- **Credit hours:** 3
- **Mode of delivery:** 100% Distance Learning

Instructor

- **Name:** Savannah H. Finver
- **Email:** finver.1@osu.edu
- **Office location:** via Zoom; no physical office available
- **Office hours:** vary by week; please contact me ahead of time to schedule an appointment
 - **Zoom link:** [insert here]
- **Preferred means of communication:**
 - My preferred method of communication for questions is **email**. While I do my best to respond to emails within a 48-hour timeframe, there are some instances when this is not possible. If you have been waiting longer than 48 hours for a response from me, please feel free to resend your email to ensure that I've received it. I encourage you to ask questions early; **do not wait** until the night before an assignment is due to submit your question, as you are unlikely to receive an answer in a timely fashion. Note: all emails should contain a proper greeting (e.g. "Dear/Hi/Good Morning Professor,"), proper grammar (no text-speak such as "how r u?"), and a proper closing ("Thanks/Best/Sincerely, [Your Name]"). Emails are an excellent place to practice professional writing skills!
 - My class-wide communications will be sent through the Announcements tool in CarmenCanvas. Please check your [notification preferences](https://go.osu.edu/canvas-notifications) (go.osu.edu/canvas-notifications) to be sure you receive these messages.

Course Description

This course is designed to offer students an introduction to a wide array of religious traditions by examining the stories and scriptures commonly associated with those traditions. Throughout the



course, we will examine three key questions: (1) What do we mean by “sacred”? (2) What do we mean by “text”? (3) What do we mean by “sacred text”? Taking the scholarly method of comparison as our base, students will explore a range of narrative themes as they appear, not only in the relevant scriptures of “mainstream” world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, but also of minority religions (Native American traditions and Scientology), ancient religions (ancient Greek hymns and Gnostic texts), popular culture (*Star Wars*, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, and *The Matrix*), and nationalist texts (the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights). In putting these various “texts” in conversation with each other, students will be invited to question the distinctions we draw between sacred/secular, text/performance/film, story/scripture, and religion/politics, among others.

General Education Expected Learning Outcomes

RELSTDS 2102.02 fulfills the Legacy categories of Literature and Diversity: Global Studies.

As part of the **Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts** category of the new General Education curriculum, this course is designed to prepare students to:

1. Analyze, interpret, and evaluate major forms of human thought, cultures, and expression, and demonstrate capacities for aesthetic and culturally informed understanding.
2. Successful students will experience the arts and reflect on that experience critically and creatively.

By the end of this course, successful students are able to:

- **1.1** Analyze and interpret significant works of visual, spatial, literary and/or performing arts and design.
- **1.2** Describe and explain how cultures identify, evaluate, shape and value works of literature, art and design.
- **1.3** Evaluate how artistic ideas influence and shape human beliefs and the interactions between the arts and human perceptions and behavior.
- **1.4** Evaluate social and ethical implications in literature, visual and performing arts, and design.
- **2.1** Engage in informed observation and/or active participation within the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.
- **2.2** Critically reflect on and share their own experience of observing or engaging in the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.

This course fulfills these learning outcomes by examining a range of textual kinds and formats from a variety of traditions. Students will be invited to contextualize these works through close reading, situating the works in their current and historical cultural contexts, and class discussion posts or recorded discussions of some key case studies involving sacred texts in the U.S. public square. Students will be provided the relevant key terms and tools to engage in a critical analysis, in both discussion and writing, of texts from a variety of cultures through engagement with video recordings of PowerPoint presentations prepared by the professor.

How This Online Course Works

Mode of delivery: This course is 100% online. There are no required sessions when you must be logged in to Carmen at a scheduled time. However, there will be some weeks throughout the semester where I will ask you to coordinate with your small groups to record a short (approx. 10 minutes) Zoom session where you discuss course material together. For such assignments, students should coordinate with the members of their small groups to find a time to meet via Zoom that works for them. Small groups will not contain more than 5 students.

Additionally, depending on how students are doing in the course, I may schedule times when I will be available via Zoom to review course materials and take student questions. Attendance in such sessions will be *optional*, as they are likely to be scheduled *in addition to* regular coursework for the week.

Pace of online activities: This course operates on a Tuesday to Sunday cycle, so you have weekend days to complete regular work. Each week, the week's module will go live on Tuesday. All regular participation for the week, including completion of all the module components, any special activities, and weekly reflection posts are due on Sunday by midnight. All additional assignments are also due on Sunday night by midnight, as indicated on the course schedule and in the assignments section of this document.

In terms of module components, students should expect to view at least (2) 50-60 minute lectures prepared by the instructor alongside included PowerPoints. At least 10 additional minutes of media clip viewings (e.g., YouTube) can be expected, as well. Though the time it takes for an individual student may vary, know that students will never be assigned more than 30 pages per class session.

It will be a rare occurrence for me to open a module early. This is to prevent students from handing in many assignments at once, especially before we've had a chance to cover the relevant topics as a class, or all at the end of the semester. It is also to help create the sense that you're working through the class together as a group like you would in-person. For students who like to work ahead, our scheduled readings and larger assignments (short essays and final projects, for example) are included in the syllabus, so that would be the place to start.

Similarly, if you know far in advance that you will be traveling a certain week for a religious holiday, sports competition, academic conference, or other similar conflict, you should let me know **well in advance** so that I can make an appropriate accommodation for you. Because you have a full school week to complete modules, late work will only be accepted in **dire** circumstances. Dire circumstances include, but are not necessarily limited to: a death in the family, a severe case of the flu/pneumonia/COVID, an accident which causes a severe injury that would have prevented you from attending an in-person class, a hospitalization, a mental health crisis, etc. If you attempt to hand in late work more than once, I may ask you for paper documentation demonstrating the reason for your extended absence (e.g. a doctor's note or a funeral program).

Attendance and participation requirements:

Research shows regular participation is one of the highest predictors of success. Because this is a distance-education course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. With that in mind, I have the following expectations for student participation:

- Logging in: AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK TO PASS THE CLASS**

Be sure you are logging in to the course in Carmen each week, including weeks with holidays or weeks with minimal online course activity. (During most weeks you will log in and interact with our Carmen site many times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me *as soon as possible*. This is a strange semester, which will require a great deal of flexibility from us all. At the same, **missing an entire week of class without a really good reason (that is, something that would count as a multi-day excused absence for an in-person class, with documentation) is generally grounds for failure of the course. If you fall ill or have another reason for missing more than a week of class, you are expected to contact me to let me know.** See below for explanation of excused absences.
- Office hours: OPTIONAL**

All live office hours are optional and are available as video sessions, audio calls, or real-time text chats through CarmenZoom. If you would like to arrange a one-on-one meeting with me for office hours, please message or email me directly, preferably at the beginning of the week. My availability varies by week, which is why I cannot provide set office hours. Please do not take this as an indication that I am not available or am unwilling to meet with you. My hours of availability simply change based upon the week, so don't hesitate to reach out to find a time that works for both of us.
- Participating in discussion forums: TWO OR MORE TIMES PER WEEK**

As part of your participation, each week you can expect to post at least twice as part of our substantive class discussion on the week's topics. Often, you will end up posting more frequently than that, but occasionally I will swap out written responses with coordinated Zoom discussions that you will attend and record in your small groups. On non-recorded discussion weeks, an initial post will be due by Thursday and a second/response post by Sunday.
- Other Participation: AS INDICATED IN THE MODULE**

You are expected to complete *all* activities within each week's module, which will vary week to week. Most of these are graded on thoughtful participation, rather than evaluation through tests or quizzes. Any activities you do not complete will result in reduced participation points that week.
- Excused absences/non-participation:**

Excuses for missing an entire week of participation are similar to excused absences in an in-person class. A death in your immediate family, a bad case of the flu, or a major mental health emergency would count because these understandably affect more than 1-3 days of work. Issues that occupy only one or two days of your week, such as a temporary childcare problem, a job interview, a religious holiday, or food poisoning do not. Pre-planned family events (weddings, reunions, etc.) and business trips also do not count as excused regardless of length;



plan to make time to do your classwork. Travel arrangements should be made around our course schedule whenever possible. All excused non-participation must be documented in writing (doctor's note, funeral program and obituary, or similar).

- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** In addition to our regular online course policies, some additional measures may be required to cope with restrictions necessitated by the pandemic. For the most part, despite the strangeness and unpredictability of this semester, I expect that changing conditions will not affect our Distance Learning class much; however, new cases and variants do seem to be popping up in increased numbers again despite our relative "return to normal." All plans for travel, quarantine, etc. need to be made with keeping up with our course in mind. However, should changes in policies or adjustments to our schedule need to be made, these will be announced via Carmen Announcements. Please check there for any syllabus updates made after the start of the term. Please reach out immediately if your ability to complete the course effectively is impacted by the pandemic, and I will seek to find good solutions with you. ***Do not wait to seek help or accommodations until after the problem has passed.***



Course Materials and Technologies

Required Reading Materials

- John Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (***PLEASE NOTE:** There is an online version available through our library system at library.osu.edu. I will make the relevant chapters available to you on Carmen if you do not wish to purchase the book for yourself.)
- Robert E. Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures* (9th edition preferred; available for rent or purchase through amazon.com. ***PLEASE NOTE:** An online version of the text will be made available to you via our Carmen website if you prefer digital access.)
- Any additional readings or videos will be uploaded to our Carmen website and can be accessed in the weeks they are assigned or through the Files tab on our website.

Required Equipment

- **Computer:** current Mac (MacOS) or PC (Windows 10) with high-speed internet connection
- **Webcam:** built-in or external webcam, fully installed and tested
- **Microphone:** built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone
- **Other:** a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) to use for BuckeyePass authentication

If you do not have access to the technology you need to succeed in this class, review options for technology and internet access at go.osu.edu/student-tech-access.

Required Software

Microsoft Office 365: All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365. Visit the [installing Office 365](http://go.osu.edu/office365help) (go.osu.edu/office365help) help article for full instructions.

CarmenCanvas Access

You will need to use [BuckeyePass](http://buckeyepass.osu.edu) (buckeyepass.osu.edu) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you do each of the following:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the [BuckeyePass - Adding a Device](http://go.osu.edu/add-device) (go.osu.edu/add-device) help article for step-by-step instructions.
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click **Enter a Passcode** and then click the **Text me new codes** button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.

- [Install the Duo Mobile application](https://go.osu.edu/install-duo) (go.osu.edu/install-duo) on all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service.

If none of these options will meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at [614-688-4357 \(HELP\)](tel:614-688-4357) and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

Technology Skills Needed for This Course

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- [Navigating CarmenCanvas](https://go.osu.edu/canvasstudent) (go.osu.edu/canvasstudent)
- [CarmenZoom virtual meetings](https://go.osu.edu/zoom-meetings) (go.osu.edu/zoom-meetings)
- [Recording a slide presentation with audio narration and recording, editing and uploading video](https://go.osu.edu/video-assignment-guide) (go.osu.edu/video-assignment-guide)

Technology Support

The professor does not provide assistance with technology for this course. For help with your password, university email, CarmenCanvas, or any other technology issues, questions or requests, contact the IT Service Desk, which offers 24-hour support, seven days a week.

- **Self Service and Chat:** go.osu.edu/it
- **Phone:** [614-688-4357 \(HELP\)](tel:614-688-4357)
- **Email:** servicedesk@osu.edu

Grading and Faculty Response

How Your Grade is Calculated

Assignment Category	Points
Weekly discussions/activities/reflections	20 points
Brief Comparative Analyses of Quotations	20 points
Recorded Small Group Discussions	20 points
Final Project	30 points
Final Reflection Paper	10 points

See [Course Schedule](#) for due dates.

Descriptions of Major Course Assignments

1. **Weekly Attendance/Discussions/Participation (20% of final grade):** The structure of this course is based largely around the benefits of both small- and large-group discussion and reflection. In order for you to acquire the key terms and concepts that you will need to complete your analyses and final projects, viewing/listening to/reading/participating in weekly materials and written discussion activities will be necessary and mandatory. The best method for preparing for these discussions is to fully complete all assigned readings and view all video lectures I prepare for you. Take note that attendance, discussion, and participation opportunities are not graded for specific points. Rather, recall that you must log in *at least once per week* to pass the class, as doing so is necessary in order to complete the aforementioned activities (just as you would need to be present in an in-person class in order to participate in structured discussions, activities, etc.). Indeed, you will frequently need to log in more than once per week, and you will also be required to interact with/respond to each other at times.
2. **Four (4) Brief Comparative Analyses of Quotations (5 points each; 20% of final grade):** Four times throughout the semester, students will be asked to compose a brief (~250 words or less) written comparative analysis of two quotations taken directly from the sacred texts we review in class. The professor will provide the quotations for the first two assignments, while students will be free to choose their own quotations for the final two. Successful submissions will demonstrate clear understanding of the relevant texts, identify key terms or phrases from our course within their analyses of the quotations, use relevant course concepts to demonstrate

the importance of the chosen quotations, and offer an opinion or conclusion on what can be learned or gained by comparing the two texts. More specific instructions will be provided in the prompts for these assignments.

3. **Four (4) Recorded Small Group Discussions (5 points each, 20% of final grade):** Several times throughout the semester, students will be asked to coordinate with their small groups to engage with classmates in a recorded verbal discussion regarding the material for the week. These assignments should be considered informal and are mainly an opportunity for students to interact and learn from each other. For best marks, everyone in the group should contribute at least one substantial comment or question to the discussion. Discussions should also make direct references to the relevant reading(s)/film(s). However, discussions should not be “scripted” like a podcast; thoughts should flow naturally in response to questions as they would in an in-class discussion.
4. **Final Project Presentations (30% of final grade):** In the final two weeks of our course, students will be asked to work alone or in groups to record a Zoom video or podcast presenting a text of great significance to them in their lives as a “sacred text.” The text need not (and indeed **should not**) be one that we would typically consider sacred, such as the Bible or the Quran; neither should it be a text we have already discussed in class. Rather, this is an opportunity for students to be creative by adapting other kinds of texts (e.g., a novel or series of novels, a television series, a movie, a national text, an established local myth or legend, etc.) to be presented to the class as if it were traditionally sacred. Detailed instructions will be provided in the second half of the semester.
5. **Final Reflection paper (2-3 pages; 10% of final grade):** For this informal final paper, students will be asked to reflect on what they have learned throughout the course by writing about the key concept and sacred text explored in the course that was most meaningful to them. Detailed instructions and a rubric will be provided in the second half of the semester.

Extra Credit: The Center for the Study of Religion hosts a public blog (“Conceiving Religion,” u.osu.edu/csrblog) which showcases the work of both faculty and students in Religious Studies. Students may submit up to **two** polished, well-written 250-to-500-word blog posts for publication on the Center’s blog for up to **two** points on their final grade. Drafts should either provide a shortened version of a comparative analysis of two texts we will review this semester OR focus on something you learned in class that you were surprised about / a skill you gained in class that you can apply to your major or minor field of study. Students should work with the instructor to prepare their drafts for publication.

Academic integrity and collaboration: Your written assignments, including discussion posts, should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you should follow whichever citation style you are most comfortable with to cite the ideas and words of your research sources. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in. The Writing Center is an excellent resource for students struggling with writing-based skills.

On the Use of AI and ChatGPT: As you may have already heard, there has been a great deal of controversy in higher education recently regarding the development of OpenAI's ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence bot designed to be able to assist humans with a range of tasks, from answering complex philosophical questions to composing entire essays. Though this is not the first bot of this kind, its particularly advanced capabilities in structuring and restructuring original sentences has made it a matter of particular concern for professors who assign writing prompts of any kind.

Let me be clear: the use of ChatGPT or any other AI essay generator to complete your work is plagiarism and will be treated accordingly if discovered. More importantly, however, in using such technology, you'll only be cheating yourself. This course is designed to impart to you valuable thinking, writing, and communication skills. You forfeit the opportunity to gain these skills by handing responsibility for your assignments over to someone else, whether that someone is a human or a bot. Furthermore, this will be one of very few courses you will take in your college career where your opinion matters a great deal, both to me as the professor and to the progress of the class. I would rather receive an original assignment with imperfect grammar or sentence structure, but which allows me to learn more about you as a person, than a "perfectly" structured assignment that doesn't really answer the prompt anyway. There are very few strictly "correct" or "incorrect" answers in this class; the benefits to you are not in memorizing content, but in learning how to think critically, problem-solve efficiently, and communicate your thoughts clearly to others. No bot is going to be able to simulate those skills for you. You are allowed to use tools such as Grammarly or Microsoft Word's spellcheck function, but you should not be using bots to come up with ideas for your assignments for you. If you find yourself struggling with an assignment, your best course of action would be to contact me as early as possible so we can generate some ideas together. I'm always happy to help!

Instructor Feedback and Response Time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. Remember that you can call [614-688-4357 \(HELP\)](tel:614-688-4357) at any time if you have a technical problem.

- **Preferred contact method:** If you have a question, please contact me first through my Ohio State email address (listed above). I will reply to emails within **48 hours on days when class is in session at the university**.
- **Class announcements:** I will send all important class-wide messages through the Announcements tool in CarmenCanvas. Please check [your notification preferences](https://go.osu.edu/canvas-notifications) (go.osu.edu/canvas-notifications) to ensure you receive these messages.
- **Discussion board:** I will check and reply to messages where needed in the discussion boards once mid-week and once at the end of the week.
- **Grading and feedback:** For assignments submitted by the due date, I will try to provide feedback and grades within **14 days**. Assignments submitted after the due date will have reduced feedback, and grades may take longer to be posted.

Grading Scale

93–100: A
90–92.9: A-
87–89.9: B+
83–86.9: B
80–82.9: B-
77–79.9: C+
73–76.9: C
70–72.9: C-
67–69.9: D+
60–66.9: D
Below 60: E

Other Course Policies

Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we will communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful as you engage with the texts, films, and each other during our class.

- **Writing style:** While there is no need to draft your weekly reflection posts as if you were writing a formal research paper, you should remember to write using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Be professional in discussion posts and communications with me. Informality (such as an occasional emoticon) in those situations is fine; foul language and textspeak are not. Any assignments submitted as a file upload on a specified Assignment page rather than through a discussion forum should be considered formal assignments and should be written in an appropriately formal tone.
- **Citing your sources:** Please cite your sources to support what you express and never express an idea as your own that is not. This *includes* in your discussion posts and recorded verbal conversations with your small groups. (If you are citing course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.) I ask you to do this for the purpose of developing important critical thinking skills: you should always be able to identify where your ideas are coming from. If your ideas are coming from personal experience or something you saw on social media, mention that! It's key background information. Formal written assignments have more stringent requirements; see assignment sheets.
- **Backing up your work:** Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Carmen discussion. (Definitely do this if you are having technical difficulties.)
- **Conduct expectations:** Rules regarding basic classroom interaction remain fairly constant across all classes at the university, and we will maintain that decorum in this class even though we are not meeting in person. This course requires a commitment from all of us to maintain collegial, respectful spaces throughout: in group discussions, live sessions, and other venues. Because we are in a discussion-based environment and I believe in making the best possible use of your time in our classroom, guidelines governing your behavior in this class are strict. This also applies to communication about class or class-created groups outside of official platforms (for example, harassment of one of your small group colleagues on Twitter would still be a violation of our behavioral norms).

As we all know, online communication can encourage nasty and dehumanizing behavior to strangers because there's a perceived lack of consequences, especially around controversial topics such as religion and politics, both of which we will be discussing here. There are consequences in this class. Your classmates will not feel like strangers by the end of the term. If you act like a troll—using slurs or other hate speech, denigrating your classmates' identities, advocating violence, or any other flagrant disrespect—your grade will be affected and you will be reported to Committee on Academic Misconduct. Incidents of bias and other disruptive virtual behavior will be reported to [the Office of Institutional Equity](#), Student Conduct, and/or



(for talk about violence) OSU Police, and will be subject to whatever consequences the appropriate offices choose to impose. Bias includes any kind of discriminatory talk or action against an individual or group based on sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, color, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, veteran status, or HIV status. Sexual harassment (definitions here: <https://titleix.osu.edu/navigation/policy/definitions.html>) also will not be tolerated.

Though we will aggressively counteract these instances, it's unlikely these issues will arise. Just please prepare to engage with this course with genuine curiosity, openness to new ideas, and respect for difference. We'll all get the most out of the experience that way.

Academic Policies

See [Descriptions of Major Course Assignments](#) for specific guidelines about collaboration and academic integrity in the context of this online class.

Ohio State's Academic Integrity Policy

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the university's [Code of Student Conduct](http://studentconduct.osu.edu) (studentconduct.osu.edu), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the university's *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the university's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by university rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the university's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- [Committee on Academic Misconduct](http://go.osu.edu/coam) (go.osu.edu/coam)
- [Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity](http://go.osu.edu/ten-suggestions) (go.osu.edu/ten-suggestions)
- [Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity](http://go.osu.edu/cardinal-rules) (go.osu.edu/cardinal-rules)

Copyright for Instructional Materials

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

1. Online reporting form at equity.osu.edu,
2. Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
3. Or email equity@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately. Please be aware that all professors are mandated reporters, meaning that we are legally obligated to report cases of sexual abuse and harassment that we are made aware of regardless of the circumstances. If you would like assistance contacting a non-

mandated reporter, please let me know so that I can help you get in contact with OSU's counseling services.

- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the land that The Ohio State University occupies is the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe and Cherokee peoples. Specifically, the university resides on land ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the forced removal of tribes through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. I/We want to honor the resiliency of these tribal nations and recognize the historical contexts that has and continues to affect the Indigenous peoples of this land.

More information on OSU's land acknowledgement can be found here: <https://mcc.osu.edu/about-us/land-acknowledgement>

Religious Accommodations

It is Ohio State's policy to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all students. The policy permits a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief. Students planning to use religious beliefs or practices accommodations for course requirements must inform the instructor in writing no later than 14 days after the course begins. The instructor is then responsible for scheduling an alternative time and date for the course requirement, which may be before or after the original time and date of the course requirement. These alternative accommodations will remain confidential. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all course assignments are completed.

Your Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling [614-292-5766](tel:6142925766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614-292-5766](tel:6142925766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Accessibility Accommodations

Disability Services

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are isolating while waiting for a COVID-19 test result, please let me know immediately. Those testing positive for COVID-19 should refer to the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes site](#) for resources. Beyond five days of the required COVID-19 isolation period, I may rely on Student Life Disability Services to establish further reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Accessibility of Course Technology

This online course requires use of CarmenCanvas (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations as early as possible.

- [CarmenCanvas accessibility](http://go.osu.edu/canvas-accessibility) (go.osu.edu/canvas-accessibility)
- Streaming audio and video
- [CarmenZoom accessibility](http://go.osu.edu/zoom-accessibility) (go.osu.edu/zoom-accessibility)

Course Schedule (tentative)

Week	Dates	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Due Dates
1	1/9 – 1/14	<p>Unit 1: Introduction – What is a “sacred text”?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Course Syllabus; S. Brent Plate, “Star Wars”</p> <p><u>Optional Viewing:</u> <i>Star Wars: A New Hope</i> (streaming on Disney+)</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> Syllabus Questions (optional); Introduction post; What Does “Sacred” Mean to You?; Is Star Wars a Sacred Text?</p>
2	1/16 – 1/21	<p>Unit 2: Comparison as Scholarly Method</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Van Voorst, Ch. 1 “Scripture Among the World Religions”; Martin, <i>A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, Ch. 1</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> The Limits of “Scripture”; Reflecting on “Bias”</p> <p>Recorded Small-Group Discussion: Our Questions about Sacred Texts</p>
3	1/23 – 1/28	<p>Unit 3: Oral Traditions – Indigenous (Re)Tellings</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Neihardt, <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> - Prefaces, Ch. 1-3, 7-11, 20-26</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> Authorship; Oral vs. Written Stories; Translation</p>
4	1/30 – 2/4	<p>Unit 4: Creation Myths - Grouping Kinds</p> <p><u>Viewing:</u> Avatar the Last Airbender, Episode 11 “Redemption”</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Van Voorst, Ch. 2 “Hinduism” pp. 22-36; Ch. 3 “Buddhism” pp. 67-83</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignment:</u> Reflections on AtIA; How Do Creation Myths Structure Social Groups?</p> <p>Recorded Small Group Discussion: Hindu Creation Myths and the Caste System</p>
5	2/6 – 2/11	<p>Unit 4 (cnt’d): Creation Myths – Structuring Worlds</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Van Voorst, Ch. 10 “Judaism” pp 215-224, 231-234; Ch. 12 “Islam” pp. 308-314, 322-331; Urban “The Church of Scientology”</p> <p><u>Viewing:</u> South Park Scientology Clip</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignment:</u> Finding the Strange in the Familiar and the Familiar in the Strange</p> <p>Brief Comparative Analysis 1 due 2/11 by 11:59pm.</p>
6	2/13 – 2/18	<p>Unit 5: The Hero’s Journey – Myths and Popular Culture</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Schwab, “Heracles”; S. Brent Plate, “Something Borrowed, Something Blue”</p> <p><u>Viewing:</u> The Matrix</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> Ancient “Religion” and the Hero Archetype; Heroes in Modern and Contemporary Literature</p>



7	2/20 – 2/25	<p>Unit 5 (cnt'd): The Hero's Journey – Call of the Prophets</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Van Voorst, Ch. 10 "Judaism" pp. 225-229; Ch. 11 "Christianity" pp. 264-281; Ch. 12 "Islam" pp. 315-321</p> <p><u>Viewing:</u> Veggie Tales, TBD</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignment:</u> Are the Prophets "Heroes"?</p> <p><u>Recorded Small Group Discussion:</u> What role does commercialism play in whether we treat certain texts/figures as "sacred"?</p>
8	2/27 – 3/3	<p>Unit 6: Creating Canon – Secret Gospels, Expanded Universes</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> "The Secret Gospel of John"</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> Canon in Fandoms; What/Who Determines Canon?; Interpreting SGoJ</p> <p>Brief Comparative Analysis 2 Due on Carmen on 3/3 by 11:59pm</p>
9	3/5 – 3/10	<p>Unit 7: Rituals – Creating Habits</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Miner, "Body Rituals Among the Nacirema"; Van Voorst Ch. 2 "Hinduism" pp. 47-54; Ch. 3 "Buddhism" pp. 101-103; Ch. 10 "Judaism" pp. 251-255; Ch. 12 "Islam" pp. 338-343</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> Rituals vs. Habits; Reflecting on the Language; Cross-Cultural Comparison of Ritual Actions</p>
10	3/12 – 3/17	<p>Spring Break: No Classes!</p>
11	3/19 – 3/24	<p>Unit 8: Ethics – Creating People</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Van Voorst, Ch. 6 "Confucianism" pp. 142-161; Ch. 7 "Daoism" pp. 168-183</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignments:</u> Reflection: Which system of ethics feels more familiar to you? Which do you prefer? Why?</p> <p>Brief Comparative Analysis 3 Due on Carmen on 3/19 by 11:59pm</p>
12	3/26 – 3/31	<p>Unit 9: Rules and Laws – Governing Communities</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Van Voorst, Ch. 10 "Judaism" pp. 238-247; Ch. 11 "Christianity" pp. 289-296; Ch. 12 "Islam" pp. 333-337, 349-350; Laycock, "The Day Satan Came to Oklahoma"</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignment:</u> The Utility of Laws in Maintaining Communities</p> <p><u>Recorded Small Group Discussion:</u> When Religions' Laws and States' Laws Clash in the Public Square</p>
13	4/2 – 4/7	<p>Unit 10: Where Myths and Laws Meet – Intelligent Design</p> <p><u>Viewing:</u> Nova – "Judgment Day: Intelligent Design on Trial"</p> <p><u>Discussion Assignment:</u> Religion and Science; The Utility of Myth</p> <p>Brief Comparative Analysis 4 due on Carmen on 4/2 by 11:59pm</p>

14	4/9 – 4/14	<p>Unit 11: Nationalism – The Profane is the Sacred</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Hughes, “The Myth of the Chosen Nation”; Elving, “Repeal the Second Amendment? That’s Not So Simple. Here’s What it Might Take” via NPR</p> <p><i>Discussion Assignments:</i> Response to American Progress (painting); What National Myths Conceal; Recontextualizing the Second Amendment</p>
15	4/16 – 4/22	<p>Final Projects to be submitted on Carmen on 4/22 by 11:59pm</p>
16	4/30	<p>Final Reflection Paper Due</p>

RS 2102.02

COMPARATIVE SACRED TEXTS

050 Hagerty Hall

Prof. Savannah H. Finver
Department of Comparative Studies
451 Hagerty Hall

email: finver.1@osu.edu
office hours: by appointment in person and via Zoom

Purpose and Outline

This course is designed to offer students an introduction to a wide array of religious traditions by examining the stories and scriptures commonly associated with those traditions. Throughout the course, we will examine three key questions: (1) What do we mean by “sacred”? (2) What do we mean by “text”? (3) What do we mean by “sacred text”? Taking the scholarly method of comparison as our base, students will explore a range of narrative themes as they appear, not only in the relevant scriptures of “mainstream” world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, but also of minority religions (Native American traditions and Scientology), ancient religions (ancient Greek hymns and Gnostic texts), popular culture (*Star Wars*, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, and *The Matrix*), and nationalist texts (the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights). In putting these various “texts” in conversation with each other, students will be invited to question the distinctions we draw between sacred/secular, text/performance/film, story/scripture, and religion/politics, among others.

General Education Expected Learning Outcomes

This course meets the GE requirements for *Literature* and for *Diversity: Global Studies*. The expected learning outcomes for *Literature* are:

1. Students analyze, interpret, and critique significant literary works.
2. Through reading, discussing, and writing about literature, students appraise and evaluate the personal and social values of their own and other cultures.

The expected learning outcomes for *Diversity: Global Studies* are:

1. Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S.
2. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

This course also meets the GE requirements for *Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts* and for *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Diversity*.

The expected learning outcomes for *Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts* are:

- 1.1 Analyze and interpret significant works of visual, spatial, literary and/or performing arts and design.
- 1.2 Describe and explain how cultures identify, evaluate, shape and value works of literature, art and design.
- 1.3 Evaluate how artistic ideas influence and shape human beliefs and the interactions between the arts and human perceptions and behavior.
- 1.4 Evaluate social and ethical implications in literature, visual and performing arts, and design.
- 2.2 Critically reflect on and share their own experience of observing or engaging in the visual, spatial, literary, or performing arts and design.

The expected learning outcomes for *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Diversity* are:

- 1.2 Explain how categories including race, gender and ethnicity continue to function within complex systems of power to impact individual lived experiences and broader societal issues.
- 2.1 Demonstrate critical self-reflection and critique of their social positions and identities.
- 2.2 Recognize how perceptions of difference shape one's own attitudes, beliefs or behaviors.

In order for students to achieve these goals, this course will examine a range of types of texts from a variety of traditions and will be invited to contextualize these works through close reading, situating the works in their current and historical cultural contexts, and in-class discussion of some key case studies involving sacred texts in the U.S. public square. Students will be given the relevant key terms and tools to engage in a critical analysis, in both discussion and writing, of texts from a variety of cultures.

READINGS

There are two required texts for this course:

1. John Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (any addition; there is an online version available through our library system at library.osu.edu)
2. Robert E. Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures* (9th edition preferred; available for rent or purchase through amazon.com)

There will also be some shorter readings available online through our Carmen site. Readings available on Carmen will be indicated as such in our weekly schedule.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

Evaluations in this class will be based on the following activities:

1. **Attendance/Participation (30% of final grade):** The structure of this course is based largely around the benefits of both small- and large-group discussion and reflection. In order for you to acquire the key terms and concepts that you will need to complete your short papers and final projects, attendance at and participation in these discussions will be necessary and mandatory. The best method for preparing for these discussions is to fully complete all assigned readings. Beyond your first two absences, documentation will be required if you don't want continued absences to affect your grade.
2. **Four (4) Brief Comparative Analyses of Quotations (5 points each; 20% of final grade):** Four times throughout the semester, students will be asked to compose a brief (~250 words or less) written comparative analysis of two quotations taken directly from the sacred texts we review in class. The professor will provide the quotations for the first two assignments, while students will be free to choose their own quotations for the final two. Successful submissions will demonstrate clear understanding of the relevant texts, identify key terms or phrases within the quotations, use relevant course concepts to demonstrate the importance of the chosen quotations, and offer an opinion or conclusion on what can be learned or gained by comparing the two texts. More specific instructions will be provided in the prompts for these assignments.
3. **Five (5) Entrance/Exit Tickets – In-Class Assignments (2 points each; 10% of final grade):** Several times throughout the semester, students will be asked to respond in writing to a discussion question posed in class. The professor will collect written responses for credit. There will be multiple opportunities to complete these, so the first 5 completed tickets will be marked for points. In the event of an absence, students will be able to make up these mini-assignments at a later date.
4. **Final Project Presentations (30% of final grade):** In the final two weeks of our course, students will be asked to work alone or in groups to present a text of great significance to them in their lives as a “sacred text.” The text need not (and indeed **should not**) be one that we would typically consider sacred, such as the Bible or the Quran. Rather, this is an opportunity for students to be creative by adapting other kinds of texts (e.g., a novel or series of novels, a television series, a movie, a national text, an established local myth or legend, etc.) to be presented to the class as if it were traditionally sacred. Detailed instructions will be provided in the second half of the semester.
5. **Final Reflection paper (2-3 pages; 10% of final grade):** For this informal final paper, students will be asked to reflect on what they have learned throughout the course by writing about the key concept and sacred text explored in the course that was most meaningful to them. Detailed instructions and a rubric will be provided in the second half of the semester.

Extra Credit: The Center for the Study of Religion hosts a public blog (“Conceiving Religion,” u.osu.edu/csrblog) which showcases the work of both faculty and students in Religious Studies. Students may submit up to **two** polished, well-written 250-to-500-word blog posts for publication on the Center’s blog for up to **two** points on their final grade. Drafts should either provide a shortened version of a comparative analysis of two texts we will review this semester OR focus on something you learned in class that you were surprised about / a skill you gained in class that you can apply to your major or minor field of study. Students should work with the instructor to prepare their drafts for publication.

GRADING

Course grades will be based on total points earned out of 100 according to the standard OSU A-E scale that includes pluses and minuses. In general, “A” work is excellent and meets or exceeds all expectations; “B” work is very good and meets most expectations; “C” work is good and meets some expectations; “D” work satisfies very few expectations and displays minimal effort; and “E” work fails to meet basic requirements.

Total possible points: 100

Grade Points

A	93.0-100
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83.0-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77.0-79.9
C	73.0-76.9
C-	70.0-72.9
D+	67.0-69.9
D	60.0-66.9
E	59.9 or below

Course Policies: Student Rights & Conduct

COVID-19:

As of May 9, 2022, masks remain optional in most indoor spaces. It is unacceptable under any circumstances to comment on another person’s decision to wear or not to wear a mask. If at any time you feel concerned for your personal health or safety, you should consult me immediately. If you receive a positive COVID test and will need to miss several classes, please let me know so I can make appropriate accommodations for you. If at any point I receive a positive COVID test, I will provide everyone with instructions for next steps via email.

Expectations for Student Conduct:

Because this is an introductory course, students are not expected to be familiar with any religious traditions. Students are, however, expected to treat each text and tradition we cover in class with scholarly respect. You don't have to agree with any or all of the ideas you will be exposed to, nor are you expected to agree with your classmates; but you will be expected to express your opinions in a respectful manner. In this class, we will be thinking critically about religion, not as practitioners, but as scholars. We must therefore be willing to challenge our previously held assumptions and recognize our positions of privilege in order to better understand the varied manifestations of religion throughout the contemporary world.

Late Policy:

In the event that you anticipate missing a deadline for an assignment for any reason (personal, health-related, family-related, etc.), it is YOUR responsibility to request an extension from me via email at finver.1@osu.edu. You must request the extension **on or before** the day the assignment is due. Documentation is not required. The standard extension is **one week** from the initial due date. Additional extensions will not be granted except in dire circumstances.

Electronics and Email:

Evidence increasingly suggests that most students produce better work and receive higher grades when taking notes by hand rather than using a laptop or tablet, and that sitting near students using electronic devices has a negative effect on your grades *even if you are not using such devices yourself*. For this reason, I strongly recommend leaving your devices stored in your backpack unless I plan a discussion activity for the day that will explicitly require the use of a device (and I will always warn you of such activities the class before). If you need to use an electronic device for notetaking as part of an academic accommodation, I ask that you please let me know as soon as. If I catch you at any time engaging in non-class related activities (including completing homework assignments for other classes) on your device, your privileges will be revoked. **Cell phones are never permitted in class.** If you are expecting an important phone call or email, please leave the classroom to address it so as not to distract your classmates.

During the semester, answering student emails is a priority for me. During the week, I should respond to your queries within 48 hours, and on weekends, I should respond within 72 hours. However, please do keep in mind that I am also a full-time student myself and have my own classes to attend and assignments to do. The best way to get an immediate response from me is to ask me questions in class. If you have questions about assignments, please do not leave them until the last minute, as I may not be able to get you an answer in time. As college students, you should all be checking your email regularly. Any changes to course policies or our schedule will be communicated via email.

ChatGDP and Other AI Essay Writers:

As you may have already heard, there has been a great deal of controversy in higher education recently regarding the development of OpenAI's ChatGDP, an artificial intelligence bot designed to be able to assist humans with a range of tasks, from answering complex philosophical questions to composing entire essays. Though this is not the first bot of this kind, its particularly advanced capabilities in structuring and restructuring original sentences has made it a matter of particular concern for professors who assign writing prompts of any kind.

Let me be clear: the use of ChatGPT or any other AI essay generator to complete your work is plagiarism and will be treated accordingly if discovered. More importantly, however, in using such technology, you'll only be cheating yourself. This course is designed to impart to you valuable thinking, writing, and communication skills. You forfeit the opportunity to gain these skills by handing responsibility for your assignments over to someone else, whether that someone is a human or a bot. Furthermore, this will be one of very few courses you will take in your college career where your opinion matters a great deal, both to me as the professor and to the progress of the class. I would rather receive an original assignment with imperfect grammar or sentence structure, but which allows me to learn more about you as a person, than a "perfectly" structured assignment that doesn't really answer the prompt anyway. There are very few strictly "correct" or "incorrect" answers in this class; the benefits to you are not in memorizing content, but in learning how to think critically, problem-solve efficiently, and communicate your thoughts clearly to others. No bot is going to be able to simulate those skills for you.

Academic Misconduct:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee. For additional information, see Code of Student Conduct: <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Disability Services:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Ave; telephone 292-3307; slds.osu.edu.

Mental Health and Student Performance:

Your success in this class is of the utmost importance to me. If you are struggling in the course for any reason, I highly encourage you to reach out to me as soon as possible so that we can work through a solution together.

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available

through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1--800--273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE*

**Note: This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; the instructor reserves the right to change the schedule as necessary.*

WEEK I: Introduction – What is a “sacred text”?

1-10 **Introductions**

1-12 **Debating what is and is not a “sacred text”**
S. Brent Plate, “Star Wars” – available on Carmen

WEEK II: Comparison as Scholarly Method

1-17 **Interpreting Sacred Texts**
Van Voorst, Ch. 1: “Scripture Among the World Religions” pp. 1-20

1-19 **Problems of Classification – “Religion”**
Craig Martin, *A Critical Guide to the Study of Religion*, Ch. 1: “Religion and the Problem of Definition” pp. 1-18 (Available on Carmen)

WEEK III: Oral Traditions – Indigenous (Re)Tellings

1-24 **Lakota Religion and *Black Elk Speaks***
Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, Prefaces & Ch.1-3, 7-11

1-26 **Making Sense of *Black Elk Speaks***
Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, Ch. 20-26

WEEK IV: Creation Myths – Grouping Kinds

1-31 **Recognizing Elements of Creation Myths**
No assigned reading
In-class: *Avatar: The Last Airbender* Season 1 Episode 11 – “Redemption”

- 2-2 Creation Stories of the East**
Van Voorst, Ch. 2: “Hinduism” pp. 22-36
Ch. 3: “Buddhism” pp. 67-83

WEEK V: Creation Myths – Structuring Worlds

- 2-7 Creation Stories of the West**
Van Voorst, Ch. 10: “Judaism” pp. 215-224; 231-234
Ch. 12: “Islam” pp. 308-314; 322-331
- 2-9 The Creation of Scientology**
Hugh Urban, *New Age, Neopagan, & New Religious Movements*, Ch. 7: “The Church of Scientology” pp. 135-153 (available on Carmen)
In-class: South Park Scientology Episode
***Brief Comparative Analysis 1 due on Carmen by 11:59pm**

WEEK VI: The Hero’s Journey – Myths and Popular Culture

- 2-14 The Heroes of Greek Mythology**
Gustav Schwab, *Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece*, “Heracles” pp. 156-175
(available on Carmen)
- 2-16 Heroes in Popular Culture**
Film: The Matrix
In class: S. Brent Plate, “Something Borrowed, Something Blue: *Avatar* and the Myth of Originality”

WEEK VII: The Hero’s Journey – Call of the Prophets

- 2-21 The Prophets of the West**
Van Voorst, Ch. 10: “Judaism” pp. 215-229
Ch. 11: “Christianity” pp. 264-281
Ch. 12: “Islam” pp. 315-321
- 2-23 Mixing Scripture and Popular Culture**
No assigned reading
In class: Veggie Tales – “Lord of the Beans”

WEEK VIII: Creating Canon –Secret Gospels, Expanded Universes

- 2-28 Canon, “True” Fans, and “Casual Viewers,” Oh My!**
No assigned reading
At home, watch on YouTube: “Favreau Responds to Restarting Sequel Trilogy Canon! It's Happening (Star Wars Explained)” (link provided on Carmen)

- 3-2 Gnostic Texts**
The Secret Gospel of John (available on Carmen)
***Brief Comparative Analysis 2 due on Carmen by 11:59pm**

WEEK IX: Rituals – Creating Habits

- 3-7 What Counts as Ritual?**
Horace M. Miner, “Body Rituals Among the Nacirema” (available on Carmen)
- 3-9 Establishing Rituals**
Van Voorst, Ch. 2: “Hinduism” pp. 47-54
Ch. 3: “Buddhism” pp. 101-103
Ch. 10: “Judaism” pp. 251-255
Ch. 12 “Islam” pp. 338-343

WEEK X: Spring Break; No classes 3-14 or 3-16

WEEK XI: Ethics – Creating People

- 3-21 What Makes a Good Community?**
Van Voorst, Ch. 6: “Confucianism” pp. 142-161
- 3-23 What Makes a Good Person?**
Van Voorst, Ch. 7: “Daoism” pp. 168-183
***Brief Comparative Analysis 3 due on Carmen by 11:59pm**

WEEK XII: Rules and Laws – Governing Communities

- 3-28 Laws of the Abrahamic Traditions**
Van Voorst, Ch. 10: “Judaism” pp. 238-247
Ch. 11: “Christianity” pp. 289-296
Ch. 12: “Islam” pp. 333-337; 349-350
- 3-30 A Controversial Test Case: The Satanic Temple**
Joseph Laycock, *Speak of the Devil*, Ch. 1: “The Day Satan Came to Oklahoma” pp. 1-24 (available on Carmen)

WEEK XIII: Where Myths and Laws Meet - Intelligent Design

- 4-4 Intelligent Design in Dover, PA – NO IN-CLASS MEETING**
No assigned reading
At Home, view: Nova – “Judgement Day: Intelligent Design on Trial” (link provided on Carmen)

- 4-6 Intelligent Design and the Big Bang Theory – What Counts as Myth?**
No assigned reading
In-class: Discussion Activity
***Brief Comparative Analysis 4 due on Carmen by 11:59pm**

WEEK XIV: Nationalism – The Profane is the Sacred

- 4-11 Myths of America’s Founding**
Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, Ch. 2 “The Myth of the Chosen Nation” pp. 32-59 (available on Carmen)
- 4-13 The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights**
Ron Elving, “Repeal the Second Amendment? That’s Not So Simple. Here’s What It Might Take” via NPR (available on Carmen)
Please watch the video and read the short article that follows

WEEK XV: Presentations

- 4-18 Presentations of Final Projects**
- 4-20 Presentations of Final Projects**

WEEK XVI: Course Wrap-Up

- 4-25 Remaining Final Presentations and Course Wrap-Up Discussion**

*****Final Reflection Papers are due on Carmen by 11:59pm on May 1, 2023.**

18 September 2023

Dear Review Committee,

Please find below our response to Jeremie's feedback (for which we are greatly appreciative!):

1. Language has been added to the "Pace of Online Activities" section to better illustrate expected workload.
2. There are no actual specific point values for attendance, discussion, and participation. Rather, students inherently begin with full credit and lose credit with subsequently missed participation activities (as opposed to earning points toward this grading metric). An attempt was made in the syllabus revision to indicate this, though we're certainly open to suggestions for better clarity.
3. Timing information was added the "Participating in discussion forums" section, per Jeremie's recommendation of an initial post due on Thursday and a second/follow-up post due on Sunday.
4. We have elected to keep the "finding a time" approach so that students begin to get to know one another and develop rapport early on, through the process of exchanging messages (as opposed to the instructor having greater involvement). Indeed, these project management skills are important, i.e., reaching out to each other, scheduling a time to get together, and making sure the assignment gets done. Historically, this course has brought in many business majors who certainly benefit from practicing these skills. We would certainly be happy to share (in response to Jeremie's closing comment on this point) how this approach works in the online environment.
5. The Mental Health and Disability Services statements were updated, per ASC's website.

Best,

Mark Anthony Arceño

Academic Program Coordinator

Department of Comparative Studies

Distance Approval Cover Sheet

For Permanent DL/DH Approval | College of Arts and Sciences

Course Number and Title:

Carmen Use

When building your course, we recommend using the [ASC Distance Learning Course Template](#) for CarmenCanvas. For more on use of [Carmen: Common Sense Best Practices](#).

A Carmen site will be created for the course, including a syllabus and gradebook at minimum.

If no, why not?

Syllabus

Proposed syllabus uses the ASC distance learning syllabus template, includes boilerplate language where required, as well as a clear description of the technical and academic support services offered, and how learners can obtain them.

Syllabus is consistent and is easy to understand from the student perspective.

Syllabus includes a schedule with dates and/or a description of what constitutes the beginning and end of a week or module.

If there are required synchronous sessions, the syllabus clearly states when they will happen and how to access them.

Additional comments (optional):

Instructor Presence

For more on instructor presence: [About Online Instructor Presence](#).

Students should have opportunities for regular and substantive academic interactions with the course instructor. Some ways to achieve this objective:

Regular instructor communications with the class via announcements or weekly check-ins.

Instructional content, such as video, audio, or interactive lessons, that is visibly created or mediated by the instructor.

- Regular participation in class discussion, such as in Carmen discussions or synchronous sessions.
- Regular opportunities for students to receive personal instructor feedback on assignments.

Please comment on this dimension of the proposed course (or select/explain methods above):

Delivery Well-Suited to DL/DH Environment

Technology questions adapted from the [Quality Matters](#) rubric. For information about Ohio State learning technologies: [Toolsets](#).

- The tools used in the course support the learning outcomes and competencies.
- Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.
- Technologies required in the course are current and readily obtainable.
- Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course.

Additional technology comments (optional):

Which components of this course are planned for synchronous delivery and which for asynchronous delivery? (For DH, address what is planned for in-person meetings as well.)

If you believe further explanation would be helpful, please comment on how course activities have been adjusted for distance learning (optional):

Workload Estimation

For more information about calculating online instruction time: [ODEE Credit Hour Estimation](#).

- Course credit hours align with estimated average weekly time to complete the course successfully.
- Course includes direct (equivalent of “in-class”) and indirect (equivalent of “out-of-class”) instruction at a ratio of about 1:2.

Provide a brief outline of a typical course week, categorizing course activities and estimating the approximate time to complete them or participate:

- In the case of course delivery change requests, the course demonstrates comparable rigor in meeting course learning outcomes.

Accessibility

For more information or a further conversation, contact the [accessibility coordinator](#) for the College of Arts and Sciences. For tools and training on accessibility: [Digital Accessibility Services](#).

- Instructor(s) teaching the course will have taken Digital Accessibility training (starting in 2022) and will ensure all course materials and activities meet requirements for diverse learners, including alternate means of accessing course materials when appropriate.
- Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course. All third-party tools (tools without campus-wide license agreements) have their accessibility statements included.

Description of any anticipated accommodation requests and how they have been/will be addressed.

Additional comments (optional):

Academic Integrity

For more information: [Academic Integrity](#).

- The course syllabus includes online-specific policies about academic integrity, including specific parameters for each major assignment:
- Assignments are designed to deter cheating and plagiarism and/or course technologies such as online proctoring or plagiarism check or other strategies are in place to deter cheating.

Additional comments (optional):

Frequent, Varied Assignments/Assessments

For more information: [Designing Assessments for Students](#).

Student success in online courses is maximized when there are frequent, varied learning activities. Possible approaches:

- Opportunities for students to receive course information through a variety of different sources, including indirect sources, such as textbooks and lectures, and direct sources, such as scholarly resources and field observation.
- Variety of assignment formats to provide students with multiple means of demonstrating learning.
- Opportunities for students to apply course knowledge and skills to authentic, real-world tasks in assignments.

Comment briefly on the frequency and variety of assignment types and assessment approaches used in this course (or select methods above):

Community Building

For more information: [Student Interaction Online](#).

Students engage more fully in courses when they have an opportunity to interact with their peers and feel they are part of a community of learners. Possible approaches:

- Opportunities for students to interact academically with classmates through regular class discussion or group assignments.
- Opportunities for students to interact socially with classmates, such as through video conference sessions or a course Q&A forum.
- Attention is paid to other ways to minimize transactional distance (psychological and communicative gaps between students and their peers, instructor, course content, and institution).

Please comment on this dimension of the proposed course (or select methods above):

Transparency and Metacognitive Explanations

For more information: [Supporting Student Learning](#).

Students have successful, meaningful experiences when they understand how the components of a course connect together, when they have guidance on how to study, and when they are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. Possible approaches:

- Instructor explanations about the learning goals and overall design or organization of the course.
- Context or rationale to explain the purpose and relevance of major tasks and assignments.

- Guidance or resources for ancillary skills necessary to complete assignments, such as conducting library research or using technology tools.
- Opportunities for students to take ownership or leadership in their learning, such as by choosing topics of interest for an assignment or leading a group discussion or meeting.
- Opportunities for students to reflect on their learning process, including their goals, study strategies, and progress.
- Opportunities for students to provide feedback on the course.

Please comment on this dimension of the proposed course (or select methods above):

Additional Considerations

Comment on any other aspects of the online delivery not addressed above (optional):

Syllabus and cover sheet reviewed by *Jeremie Smith* on

Reviewer Comments:

Additional resources and examples can be found on [ASC's Office of Distance Education](#) website.

I have completed and signed off on the preliminary distance learning review for the **CS 2102.02 Comparative Sacred Texts** approval proposal. This syllabus includes all required syllabus elements and provides a clear and transparent overview of the course expectations. I have provided feedback comments on the Cover Sheet and signed it. The instructor and the department have the *option to make revisions* to the syllabus in response to feedback before submitting to the ASCC faculty review committee.

I have a few substantive *recommendations* that I think will improve the course design, add clarity to the syllabus, or support a successful review by the faculty curriculum committee.

- This being an asynchronous course, the ASCC subcommittee that reviews the course will want specific indications of meeting the required Direct Instruction for the class. In the Workload Estimation section of the Cover Sheet, you mentioned assigned “two recorded lectures and viewing visual media” per week. I recommend being a bit more specific in the “Pace of Online Activities” section of the syllabus in regard to how many hours per week, on average, students will be watching recorded lectures. This would help the faculty review panel assess the direct instruction and provide students a little more information for metacognitive reflection and making plans for weekly time management.
- I recommend disaggregating attendance/discussions/participation because the description is confusing. It is unclear how much the discussions assignments will count for compared to “logging in once a week”. We have found that any kind of measure for assessing participation based on frequency or duration of Carmen logins to be easily gamed by students and thus ineffective for monitoring student participation in the course. However, weekly assignments like quizzes and required discussions are often good measures of weekly engagement with the course.
- I like the regular weekly consistent rhythm described in the syllabus for assignments. I recommend making one addition to this plan to increase the likelihood of higher quality student discussions. I suggest making initial student discussion posts due one day (Thursday for example) and responses to another student later in the week (Sunday for example). Many instructors have reported that this small change in pacing has increased the quality of peer interaction. I also think the requirement to login to Carmen 2 times per week for the post + respond requirement would help meet the instructor’s interest in monitoring active participation in the course.
- I like the idea of the students agreeing upon a time for a short, recorded zoom discussion but wonder if “finding a time” within a chosen group would be easier than “choosing a time” and making groups based off preferred times. In this way, the instructor could produce list of scheduled times for these discussions and students could “sign up”. Perhaps there would need to be a wildcard (complex scheduling needs) group that has to decide their own times, but this may be logistically more feasible than having everyone try to find a common time among their assigned groups. I have not seen this “schedule a live discussion” approach used before, but appreciate the pedagogical purpose and would like to hear how it goes.
- There have been recent updates to the required Mental Health and Disability Services statements. You can copy the new statements from here:
<https://ascas.osu.edu/submission/development/submission-materials/syllabus-elements>

The ASC Office of Distance Education strives to be a valuable resource to instructors and departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. In addition to managing the [DL course review](#) process, [hosting ASC Teaching Forums](#), and developing an ever-expanding catalog of [instructor support resources](#), we also provide one-on-one instructional design consultation to ASC instructors interested in redesigning any aspect of their online course. If your department or any of your individual instructors wish to [meet with one of our instructional designers](#) to discuss how we can provide advice, assistance, and support, please do let me know.