

**PHIL 3610 Introduction to World Religions: Art, Poetry, and Method**

Fitchburg State University || Summer 2021 ||

3 undergraduate credit hours

Skype or Google Hangout meetings available by appointment (request by email)

**Description**

This course has three primary goals: (1) To introduce students to several religious traditions of the world, (2) To introduce students to a variety of methods for studying religion, and (3) To consider the diverse uses of art, icons, and sacred ecology in religion as it is lived and experienced by human persons. Each unit of the course models a different method. A method is a lens. One method enables us to see some things clearly; a different method enables us to see different things clearly. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. By learning a variety of methods, you will gain important skills that will be useful across the humanities. One might use each of these methods to examine a single religious tradition from multiple perspectives, or one might use one of these methods to compare several religious traditions. In this course, we will do both: We will use a variety of methods to study a variety of religious traditions.



"Muslim Mystics" India,  
17<sup>th</sup> century Mead Art  
Museum at Amherst  
College

**Format**

The course is divided into eight units. The first unit is on theories of religion. The final unit is devoted to self-directed student learning. In each of the other six units, we will study: (1) a method for studying religion, (2) the basic history and background of a religious tradition, (3) sacred poetry, scripture, or music, and (4) visual art or other media.

The course is divided into eight modules, which should be completed in order. You should read the assigned text, then take a short online quiz about the reading, then watch the corresponding lecture videos. At the end of Units 2, 4 and 7, each student should upload a Selfie Exam Video to Blackboard, discussing what you have learned from EACH of the assigned readings for the corresponding units.

Readings will be drawn from primary texts, including the *Gītā Govinda*, Poems of Rumi, Torah, writings of John of Damascus, the *Buddhacarita*, and secondary academic sources.

**Learning Goals and Skills**

There are three primary learning goals in this course:

1. Provide a very basic introduction to six religious traditions (Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Native American). If you are learning well, then you will find that you have *more* questions than answers at the end of each section.
2. Understand the value and detriment of theories and methods in the study of religion.
  - a. You should be able to articulate at least 2-3 different theories/definitions of religion and articulate how each theory is helpful and how each theory is problematic.
  - b. In each unit, we will not only study different religious traditions, but we will do so using different methods (Gender, Ethnographic, Theological, and Sociological). You should be able to describe 3-4 methods, its advantages and disadvantages.
3. Understand the diverse uses of art, icons, and sacred ecology in religion as it is lived and experienced by human persons.

## Method and Structure of the Course

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Your final grade will consist of:

Reading Quizzes:	20%
3 Selfie Videos:	60%
Final paper or video:	20%



Buddha  
18th Cent. Thailand  
Smith College Museum of Art

### Reading quizzes (20%):

Take notes as you complete the assigned readings. You may use the assigned text and your notes when you take the quizzes. However, the quizzes are timed. You only have 10 minutes to complete a quiz once you begin it. 10 minutes after you begin, Blackboard will automatically save and submit the quiz, so do not begin it until you are ready. Most quizzes are only 4-5 questions long. Please do not use the “search” function when taking quizzes and please do not discuss the quizzes with other students. Your lowest quiz grade for the semester will be dropped.

### Selfie-Videos (Three exams at 20% each, 60% total):

When I have taught this course in the past, students have written a series of 20 journal entries. In the lecture videos (which were recorded several year ago), I mention the journals frequently. This semester, instead of the journals, each student should record three selfie videos in which you discuss what you have learned from EACH of the reading assignments in the corresponding units.

The selfie videos are basically oral exams that you record on your own and then share with me. **Absolutely no one besides me will see your videos.** Each of the three videos should be about 10-15 minutes long. Please do NOT summarize what I have taught in the lecture videos! Instead, I want you to tell me *what you have learned* from the reading assignments. Your grade will be based on the following criteria:

1. Is it clear that you have read *each* of the assigned texts for the relevant units covered by the selfie exam video (Units 1-2, Units 3-4, and Units 5-7)
2. How has your understanding of those religious traditions changed and grown as a result of your reading? How well are you able to relate to the people who are discussed in the reading assignments?
3. How well have you understood the theories and methods of religious studies discussed in the course and how well have you used that understanding to inform your reading of the assignments? For example, it would be wise to mention either WC Smith or Thomas Tweed (or both) in each of your selfie video exams and explain how their theories of religion have helped you to better understand the humans discussed in each of the reading assignments?
4. In the lecture videos, I sometimes mention things that should or could be discussed in your journal assignments. Again, there are NO journal assignments for this course. However, it may be helpful to cover those topics in your selfie video exams.

3. After I watch each of your selfie video exams, I will record specific feedback for you and share it with you. A significant part of your grade on the selfie exams will be how well you have received that feedback and how successfully you have improved as a result of that feedback. As always, please email me anytime you have questions or if you want additional feedback on any assignment.

The videos are due by <insert summer due date> (Units 1 & 2), <insert summer due date> (Units 3 & 4), and <insert summer due date >(Units 5, 6, & 7).

**PLEASE NOTE:** There is NO reason to record the videos in High Def quality. I recommend that you lower the video resolution to 480p in order to keep the file size smaller. Blackboard is painfully slow when uploading. When you click “submit” to upload your video, please be VERY patient. It may seem like nothing is happening after you click submit - but if you wait 5-10 minutes, the videos will usually upload. If you make a mistake, simply upload the corrected video. I will always grade the LAST video that you upload and I will ignore the other ones if there are any. You are free to use other methods to submit your videos to me. In the past, I have had many students who uploaded an unlisted (not “private” and not “public”) video to YouTube and then submit the link to that video on Blackboard. You could also share the video with me through Google Drive **BUT** please note that if you do this, you must use your *personal* Gmail account and share it with [Brad.Bannon@gmail.com](mailto:Brad.Bannon@gmail.com). Unfortunately, the FSU system will NOT permit me to view files shared from your FSU account.

#### Final Paper or Video Project (20%):

Unfortunately, any introductory survey course must omit important and interesting religious traditions. We cannot cover them all. With that in mind, each student should select a religious tradition or topic that he/she would like to know more about. I have posted a wide selection of **pre-approved texts** on the final project section of Blackboard. Please select one of them and write a short paper about what you have learned. The final paper should be 4-6 pages long (about 1,000-1,250 words, double-spaced, 12-point standard font with 1-inch standard margins). The paper can simply summarize **what you learned** from reading and then reflect upon it from your own perspective. The best papers will **build** upon what you have learned from the semester, demonstrating that you have understood the theories and methods taught and modeled in the lectures. Please proofread very carefully and ensure that your paper is free of all spelling and grammatical mistakes. **If you would prefer to create a video presentation of 8-10 minutes instead, that will also be fine.**



#### Course Policies

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**Meeting with the Professor:** Students are welcome and encouraged to contact me anytime by email and we can set-up a Skype or Google Hangout meeting if you wish. Please feel free to email me anytime about any topic. I am also happy schedule a time to meet you on campus.

**Books:** Students are not required to purchase any books for this course. All reading assignments have been posted on the course Blackboard in accordance with academic copyright protection. These materials are for students enrolled in this course and should not be shared with others.

**Accommodation Policy:** To support access and inclusion, Fitchburg State offers reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, sensory, etc.). If you require accommodations for this class, please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Agreement as soon as possible so that we can discuss your specific needs. Any information that you share with me will be held in the strictest confidence, unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you require academic accommodations but do not have an Accommodation Agreement, please contact Disability Services as soon as possible to establish your eligibility for services. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please call 978.665.4020 (voice/relay) or email [DisabilityServices2@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:DisabilityServices2@fitchburgstate.edu). Disability Services is located in the Academic Support Center on the third floor of the Hammond building (room 303).

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity in a course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. A student's lack of understanding of the academic integrity policy is not a valid defense to a charge of academic dishonesty.

**Collaboration Policy:** You are welcome to collaborate with other students. If you discuss a reading with another student, please do mention that in your selfie video exam. I will also permit students to collaborate on their final project, but this must be discussed with me in advance. Each student is expected to fully participate in collaborative assignments. Each student in the group is expected to complete all of the reading assignment and is expected to cooperate in both the preparation and the presentation.

**Electronic Device Policy:** Students are prohibited from using the “search” function on their computers when taking quizzes. It is impossible to enforce this policy in an online course such as this. However, using the search function certainly constitutes cheating on quizzes, so please refrain from using it.

### **Late Submissions Policies**

**Any assignment:**

Submitted within 24 hours of due date:	dropped ½ letter grade
Submitted within 48 hours of due date:	dropped one letter grade
Submitted more than 48 hours of due date:	dropped two letter grades

**Absolutely no assignments will be accepted after 11:59pm on <insert summer due date>. Failure to submit an assignment will result in a “0” for that assignment.**

**Incompletes:** In accordance with University policy, I will only grant an “Incomplete” if at least 80% of all the work has been completed and submitted. For example, if you have completed all of the reading quizzes and submitted all three of the selfie video exams, then you may request an Incomplete if you need more time to complete the final project.

Course Agenda and Assignments with **firm due dates** highlighted in yellow.

Unit One: Theory and Method in the Study of Religion

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**Weeks 1-2**

Watch Lecture 1: Introduction

Upload a self-introduction video by **<insert summer due date>**

The self-intro video is not graded. However, it is helpful for me to know who is in the class and begin to learn a bit about each of you. I have found that it is also helpful for students to learn a little bit about the other students who are in the class. The self-intro video will be visible to everyone in the class and I hope you will watch what your classmates have produced. The video can be very short (1-2 minutes) and is just simply a way for you to tell us something about what makes you you!



Manasa  
"Snake Goddess"  
Madhubani painting  
(India)

Read the syllabus **Quiz 1: Syllabus**

Watch Lecture 2: Course requirements and format

**Reading Assignment 1:** Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Religion as Symbolism" in *Modern Culture from a Comparative Perspective*.

**Quiz 2:** W.C. Smith

Watch Lecture 3: Theories of Religion

**Reading Assignment 2:** Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*. Pages 1-7 and pages 54-79.

**Quiz 3:** Thomas Tweed

Watch Lecture 4: Thomas Tweed

Watch Lecture 5: Immanence, Transcendence, and Creation



## Unit Two: Sociological Method and Judaism

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### Weeks 3-4

Watch Lecture 6: Sociological Method

Watch Lecture 7: Intro to Judaism

Reading Assignment 3: Exodus 19-20, and 32 (NRSV)

Quiz 4: Exodus

Watch Lecture 8: Exodus / Arguing with God

Reading Assignment 4: Covenants. Re-read Exodus 20:4-6, then read Jeremiah 31:27-34 and Amos 5:11-27. Take note of important differences.

Video Assignment: Watch these videos by/about Matisyahu:

[King Without a Crown](#), [One Day](#), [Kim Lawton Interview](#), [Sunshine](#), [Surrender](#), and [Reservoir](#). Also, glance at these [annotated lyrics to Reservoir](#).

Quiz 5: Covenants and Matisyahu

Watch Lecture 9: Matisyahu

Watch Lecture 10: A.J. Heschel

Watch this short [video segment on Heschel](#)

Watch Lecture 11: Temple Mount

Read (or re-read) the instructions on your final projects



Moses  
by Michelangelo  
c. 1513-1515



Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin  
Luther  
King, Jr. Selma, Alabama 1965

**MONDAY, <insert summer due date> UPLOAD SELFIE EXAM VIDEO ON UNITS 1 & 2**

## Unit Three: Ethnographic Method and Islam

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### Weeks 5-6

Watch Lecture 12: Ethnographic Method

Watch Lecture 13: Introduction to Islam

Watch Lecture 14: Five Pillars

**Reading Assignment 5:** Danielle Cantini's ethnography on Ramadan.

**Quiz 6:** Cantini

Watch Lecture 15: Cantini

Watch Lecture 16: Sects of Islam

Think about your final projects

**Reading Assignment 6:** BBC introduction to Jalaluddin Rumi

**Reading Assignment 7:** Rumi poems

**Quiz 7:** Rumi

Watch Lecture 17: Rumi Poems



The Shackling of the Book of Holy War, II  
Yayasan Serambi Pirous (1999)



A Gathering of the Mystic Order Iran  
(1640s)  
Smith College Museum of Art

## Unit Four: Theological Method and Christianity

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### Weeks 7-8

Watch Lecture 18: Theological Method

Watch Lecture 19: Introduction to Christianity

**Reading Assignment 8:** Plato's "Divided Line" (*Republic* 509d-511e)

(Recommended: re-watch Lecture 5 on Plato's Divided Line)

**Reading Assignment 9:** St. John of Damascus: *In Defense of Icons*

**Quiz 8:** Plato and John of Damascus

Watch Lecture 20: John of Damascus

**Reading Assignment 10:** Nicholas of Cusa: *Vision of God*, pp680-686 (Chapters 1-4).

**Quiz 9:** Nicholas of Cusa

Watch Lecture 21: Nicholas of Cusa

**MONDAY, <insert summer due date> UPLOAD SELFIE  
EXAM VIDEO ON UNITS 3 & 4**



Portrait of a Lady (Det)  
Rogier van der Weyden  
Belgium (c.1440)



Jesus of the People  
by Janet McKenzie



## Unit Five: Ecological-Anthropological Approach to Buddhism

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### Weeks 9-10

Reading Assignment 11: Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* Canto 3.

Quiz 10: *Buddhacarita*, Canto 3

Watch Lecture 22: *Buddhacarita* Canto 3

Reading Assignment 12: Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* Canto 14  
(excerpt: pages 209-213).

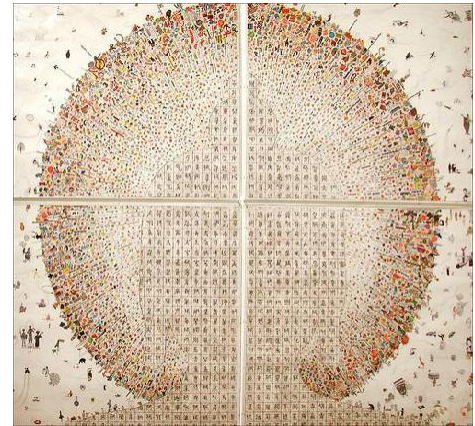
Quiz 11: *Buddhacarita*, Canto 14

Watch Lecture 23: *Buddhacarita* Canto 14

Reading Assignment 13: "The Forest, The Village, and the Ecological Monk" in Susan Darlington's *The Ordination of a Tree: The Thai Buddhist Environmental Movement* (pp29-51)

Quiz 12: Darlington's *Ordination of a Tree*

Watch Lecture 24: Darlington



The Shamhala in Modern Times  
Gonkar Gyatso (2008)



Tree ordination  
from Susan Darlington's *The Ordination of a Tree*

## Unit Six: Gender Methods and Poetry in Hindu Darśana

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### Week 11

Watch Lecture 25: Gender-Critical Method

Watch Lecture 26: Intro to Hinduism

Watch Lecture 27: Intro to Vaisnavism

**Reading Assignment 14:** Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*: Pages 69-81 and 109-125.

Watch Lecture 28: Gitagovinda

Watch Lecture 29: Saivism / Holy Family

Watch Lecture 30: Devi

Recommended: Watch the two PBS videos on Kali-bhakti. Each are only 3-minutes long, but should make the reading assignment easier to understand

**NOTE: Reading 15 and Quiz 13 are omitted from this accelerated course! Please skip them, but DO watch lecture 31.**

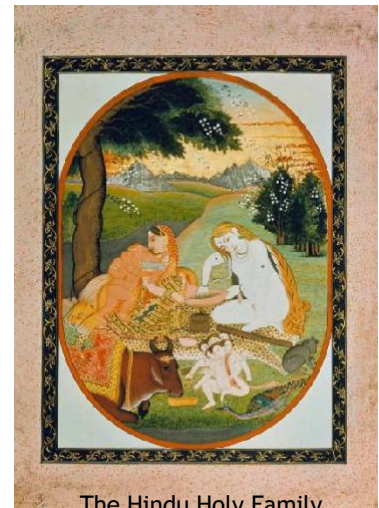
**Reading Assignment 15:** Dalmiya, Vrinda. "Loving Paradoxes: A Feminist Reclamation of the Goddess Kali." *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 125-150. (Focus on 125-131 and 138-147)

**Quiz 13:** Dalmiya

Watch Lecture 31: Kali



Meeting of Krishna and Radha  
19th Century India  
Mead Art Museum at  
Amherst College



The Hindu Holy Family  
Śiva, Pārvatī, Ganeśa, and  
Kartikeya

## Unit Seven: Performance Approaches in Native American Traditions

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### Week 12

Watch Lecture 32: Performance

Method Watch Lecture 33: Origin

Stories

**Reading Assignment 16:** Gill, Sam. "It's Where you Put your Eyes" from *Native American Religious Action: A Performance Approach to Religion* (pages 37-46)

**Quiz 14:** Gill

Watch Lecture 34: Gill

**MONDAY, <insert summer due date> UPLOAD SELFIE EXAM VIDEO ON UNITS 5, 6, & 7**

## Unit Eight: Final Research Paper OR Video

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### Weeks 13-14

**FIRDAY, <insert summer due date> SUBMIT FINAL PAPER OR VIDEO ON BLACKBOARD**

### FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE GRADING POLICY

<u>4.0</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>95 – 100</u>
<u>3.7</u>	<u>A-</u>	<u>92 – 94</u>
<u>3.5</u>	<u>A-/B+</u>	<u>89 – 91</u>
<u>3.3</u>	<u>B+</u>	<u>86 – 88</u>
<u>3.0</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>83 – 85</u>
<u>2.7</u>	<u>B-</u>	<u>80 – 82</u>
<u>2.5</u>	<u>B-/C+</u>	<u>77 – 79</u>
<u>2.3</u>	<u>C+</u>	<u>74 – 76</u>
<u>2.0</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>71 – 73</u>
<u>1.7</u>	<u>C-</u>	<u>69 – 70</u>
<u>1.5</u>	<u>C-/D+</u>	<u>67 – 68</u>
<u>1.3</u>	<u>D+</u>	<u>64 – 66</u>
<u>1.0</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>60 – 63</u>

<u>0.0</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>0-59</u>
	<u>IN</u>	<u>Incomplete</u>
	<u>IP</u>	<u>In Progress</u>
	<u>W</u>	<u>Withdrawn</u>

## **POLICY ON DISABILITY**

Disability Services is the primary support system for students with disabilities taking classes in the day and evening divisions. The office is located on the third floor of the Hammond Building and can be reached at 978-665-4020 (voice/relay). If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medication information, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment at the beginning of the course to talk with me. It is important that the issues relating to disabilities be discussed with me as soon as possible.

## **GRADE APPEAL**

If you disagree with the evaluation of your work or believe an improper grade has been assigned, an appeal may be followed. Please discuss the matter with the instructor and refer to the Fitchburg State University Grade Appeal Policy in the university catalog.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

The faculty in the Education Unit at Fitchburg State University that work submitted in fulfillment of course requirements will be solely that of the individual candidate and all other sources will be cited appropriately. University Academic Integrity Policy, as outlined in the University Catalogue, will be strictly adhered to.

**Fitchburg State University** encourages all Extended Campus students to take advantage of our online student services. We have created a “virtual student center” just for you. Here you will find access to Counseling Services, Career Services, The Student Activity Center, the university bookstore and many other helpful links. You can access our student center by going to the university homepage at <http://www.fitchburgstate.edu> and clicking on Offices and Services. Scroll down and click on Extended Campus Center. You will find links to Library Services, our Virtual Student Center and other important information.

## **FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY DISTANCE LEARNING & EXTENDED CAMPUS LIBRARY SERVICES**

The Gallucci-Cirio Library at Fitchburg State University provides a full range of library services including borrowing privileges; document delivery (books and articles mailed to your home); Interlibrary Loan; reference assistance via: phone, email, IM, Blackboard’s Collaboration and Elluminate tools, Skype and in-person; library instruction; research help and more. Any questions relating to library services should be directed to the Linda LeBlanc, Access Services Librarian, at 978-665-3062 or [dllibrary@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:dllibrary@fitchburgstate.edu). There is also a special section for Distance Learning and Extended Campus Services at <http://fitchburgstate.libguides.com/dlservices> outlining the wide range of services available to you and how to access them.

Students who are currently registered with the university may access any of the library's subscription databases, including an increasing number with full-text, by visiting the Gallucci-Cirio Library's homepage at <http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/academics/library> and clicking on the Research Databases button in the center of the page. Select the resource you want to access from the alphabetical or subject listing. Once you click on the database title you will be prompted for your Falcon Key logon information; this is the same logon you will use for your Fitchburg State email account and if you have any online Blackboard courses. If you do not know your Falcon Key username and password or if you have any problems logging in, contact the university's Technology Help Desk at 978-665-4500 or [helpdesk@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:helpdesk@fitchburgstate.edu). The Library can issue you a temporary guest Falcon Key to use while the Technology Department is setting up your account: contact us at 978-665-3062 or [dllibrary@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:dllibrary@fitchburgstate.edu)

All registered Fitchburg State University students are eligible for a Fitchburg State University OneCard ID which also serves as his/her library card. If you have not received your OneCard yet, you can still access all of our online services as long as you have activated your library account. Activate your library account online at <http://fitchburgstate.libguides.com/dlservices> or in person at the Circulation Desk. After activation by the Gallucci-Cirio Library and receipt of your OneCard, students may also use any Massachusetts State College/University Library as well as participating libraries in the Academic and Research Collaborative (ARC) during the current semester. OneCards are available on campus all year round. Students wanting a OneCard must either complete the online Extended Campus OneCard request form <http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/offices/technology/onecard/> or present a course registration confirmation at the OneCard Office in the Anthony Building, main campus. Please call 978-665-3039 for available times or if you have any questions about your OneCard.