

PHIL 3610 World Religions**3 Undergraduate Credits****Summer 2021, July 12 - August 13**

Fitchburg State University || Distance Learning

Dr. Brad Bannon || Office Location: <https://calendly.com/brad-bannon/meetings>Contact me anytime at Brad.Bannon@gmail.com

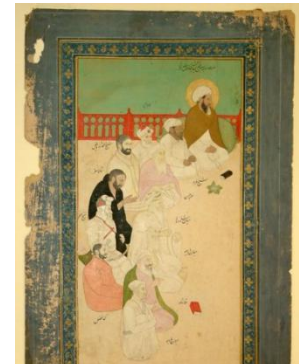
Regular online office hour: Mondays 8pm-9pm EST (Tuesdays 9-10am Shanghai time)

Other meetings by appointment (<https://calendly.com/brad-bannon/meetings>)**Catalog Description:**

This course studies the principal world religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. Emphasis is placed on their basic tenets and insights into spiritual values.

Additional detailed 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,
17th 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 online course is divided into eight modules, which must be completed in order. 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 far *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, 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

Your final grade will consist of:

Reading Quizzes:	10%
Individual meetings with Prof	20%
3 Selfie Video Journals:	50%
Final project video:	20%



Buddha
18th Cent. Thailand
Smith College Museum of Art

Reading quizzes (10%):

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. On most quizzes, there is a short-answer question. Outstanding responses to these questions can earn extra credit.

Selfie-Video Journals (Three Video journals, 50% total):

When I have taught this course in the past, students have written a series of 20 journal entries and a final project. In the lecture videos (which were recorded several year ago), I mention the journals frequently. This semester, instead of the journals, you are asked to record 3 short selfie videos journaling what you have learned from the course material and one selfie video recording what you learned from your final project research.

Video files can be large, so I strongly encourage all students to lower the quality of their video settings so that the files can be more easily shared online. I will create an individual Google Drive folder for each student, which only you and I can access. Simply save each of your videos to this folder and then submit a short note on Blackboard letting me know that you have submitted the assignment. After I watch the video, I will record a selfie video for you as feedback and add it to the same folder. I will also post your grade on Blackboard so that you will know I have submitted the feedback to your shared folder.

The instructions for the selfie videos are very simple and straightforward. I expect you to tell me what you learned from EACH of the assigned readings for that unit. Show me that you have read the assignment and show me what you have understood. The best videos are those that draw connections, comparisons, and contrasts between the assigned texts, especially connections that span the entire semester. DO NOT summarize what I have taught in the lectures. I already know what I taught! I want to know what you learned from the reading assignments. How did the reading change your thinking? What did you find most fascinating or

insightful? How did you relate to the reading? How did the reading help you to better understand the diversity of human religious expression, belief, and practice? How well are you able to apply the theories from Unit 1 to the content from the subsequent units? I encourage you to be personal and practical - demonstrating that you have read EACH of the assignments and are able to reflect on what you have learned in a meaningful way. It would also be good to explain—in your own word—the research method(s) used in those units.

I am not very concerned about the length of the videos, but 10 minutes is a good guideline. Each video you submit should show that you have watched my feedback and used it to improve your thinking.

Final Project Video (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. Read it carefully and (as always) contact me if you have any questions or difficulties understanding what you have read. When you are ready, simply record a selfie video and tell me what you have learned from your research. Some students use PowerPoint, but that is entirely up to you and is not necessary - but feel free to use PowerPoint for the final video if you are more comfortable doing so.

Submit your final project video to your individual shared Google Drive folder and indicate on Blackboard that you have done so, using the same procedure as the video journals. Most final project videos are about 10 minutes long.



Tu Cuerpo es una Frontera
By Celeste de Luna

Summary of Due Dates

TBD	Submit a short (~1 minute) video top introduce yourself
TBD	Selfie Video Journal on Units 1 & 2 Due
TBD	Selfie Video Journal on Units 3 & 4 Due
TBD	Selfie Video Journal on Units 5, 6, & 7 Due
TBD	Final Project Video Due

Course Policies

Meeting with the Professor: Students are welcome and encouraged to contact me anytime by email and we can set-up a Zoom or Google Meet 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. 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 on your journal assignments. If you discuss a reading with another student, feel free to mention that in your journal. 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 the last day of the semester. 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, and even then only when a student requests an incomplete and has a conversation with me regarding the specific deadlines and expectations for completing the unfinished work of the course.

Unit One: Theory and Method in the Study of Religion

Watch [Lecture 1: Introduction](#):

Upload a self-introduction video by

Read the syllabus

Quiz 1: Syllabus

You can take quiz 1 as many times as you wish, so please take it until you have gotten all of the answers correct. The main point of this quiz is to help you to become familiar with the quiz format and to see that everyone is making progress.

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](#)



Manasa
"Snake Goddess"
Madhubani painting
(India)

Unit Two: Sociological Method and Judaism

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

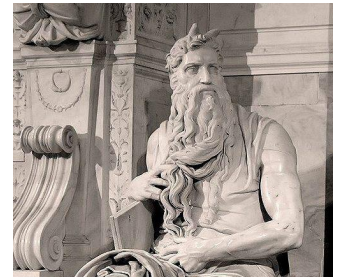
Watch [Lecture 9: Matisyahu](#)

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

Selfie Video Journal on Units 1 & 2 Due

Unit Three: Ethnographic Method and Islam

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

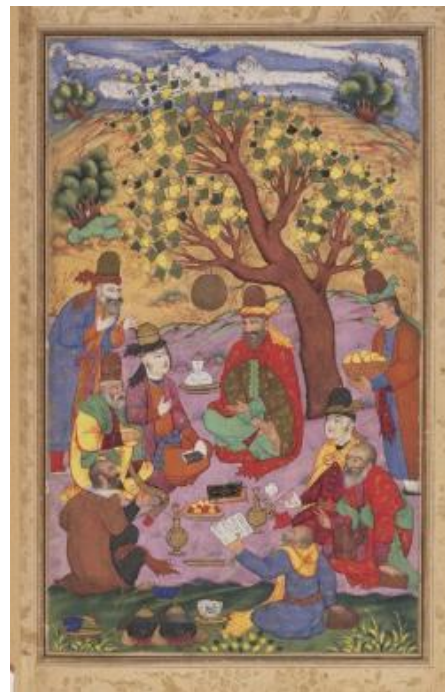
Quiz 7: Rumi

Watch [Lecture 17: Rumi Poems](#)

Watch [Sufi Whirling Dervishes video](#) (2 min)



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

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](#)

Selfie Video Journal on Units 3 & 4 Due



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

Reading Assignment 11: Āśvaghoṣa’s *Buddhacarita* Canto 3.

Quiz 10: *Buddhacarita*, Canto 3

Watch [Lecture 22: *Buddhacarita* Canto 3](#)

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

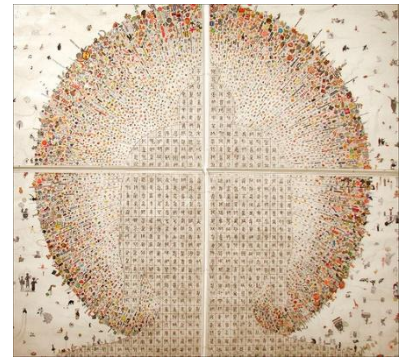
Quiz 11: *Buddhacarita*, Canto 14

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 Shambhala 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

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 [Gitagovinda Dance Performance](#) (skip ahead to start at 3:15 - no need to watch the entire video)

Watch [Geet Govindam Part I](#) (skip ahead to start at 2:46 - no need to watch the entire video)

Watch [Gita Govindam Song 3](#) (skip ahead to start at 2:46 - no need to watch the entire video)

Watch [Lecture 29: Saivism / Holy Family](#)

Watch [Lecture 30: Devi](#)

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

[3-minute video on Kali devotion](#)

[3-minute video on Navatri](#)

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

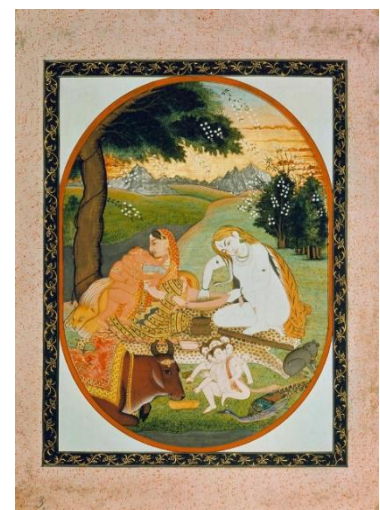
Reading Assignment 15: Dalmiya, Vrinda. "Loving Paradoxes: A Feminist Reclamation of the Goddess Kali." *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 125-150. (Focus on 125-131 and 138-147)

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

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](#)

Selfie Video Journal on Units 5, 6, & 7 Due

Unit Eight: Final Research Project

Final Project Video Due