SYLLABUS
RELS 358 (ONLINE) Sections 1 & 72
SPRING 2015
RELIGION IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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How to Communicate with Instructor:
The best way to communicate with me is through Course Messages in Blackboard Learn, or by visiting
with me in-person during office hours, or by telephone. Please do not send communications regarding this
class to my regular university email address.

Student Support for Online Learning:
Please note that if you have technical questions about Blackboard Learn, computer technology, etc. you
should contact IT Support Services at 530-898-HELP (4357) or visit their web site at
http://www.csuchico.edu/itss/

Students with Certified Disabilities:
If you have a documented disability that may require reasonable accommodations, please contact the
Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) within the first two weeks of the semester for coordination of your
academic accommodations: 530 898-5959; http://www.csuchico.edu/dss/ Please note that you may be
required to show documentation of your disability.

COURSE GOALS

To set forth a First Amendment framework for thinking about the ethical, legal, and pedagogical issues that
arise in connection with religion in public schools. Special attention will be given to several of the U.S.
Supreme Court’s decisions regarding religion and public schools.

To explain how and why the non-religious or academic approach to the study of religion in public schools
differs from religious or devotional approaches to the study of religion in traditional religious settings.
Special attention will be given to the methods and aims of the academic study of religion.

To explore how the cross-cultural and historical study of religious and secular worldviews can contribute to
the task of civic education in a pluralistic democracy.

To introduce key beliefs, values, symbols, rituals, stories, and institutions of several of the world's major
religions.

To introduce the diversity that exists within as well as between religious traditions.

To provide a comparative framework for analyzing the interaction between worldviews, ethics, behaviors,
and institutions.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Please note that this is a group-paced course, which means that we will be proceeding through the sixteen weeks of the semester as a class, not as isolated individuals. Much learning takes place in conversation as we strive to articulate our own understandings of what we have read, as we struggle to formulate questions and answers, and as we listen to what others have to say. In a course on campus this happens during weekly class meetings. In this online course we will try to re-create some of the give and take of classroom and small group discussion through frequent use of the Discussion Tool in Blackboard Learn. While we will not be meeting together at a specific time in a specific place, we will be proceeding together through the material in each course module week by week. You must be willing and able to commit time and effort to this course on a weekly basis throughout the next sixteen weeks. This is not a course that you can finish-up in the first few weeks of the semester nor put off to the last few weeks of the semester.

The course consists of ten modules. Specific instructions, assignments, and due dates are given within each module. Modules are located in the Course Content area in Blackboard Learn.

I. A First Amendment Framework for Thinking about Religion and Public Education

1st week
Module 1: Introduction to the Course, Requirements, and Procedures

2nd week
Module 2: Religion, Education, and American Democracy

3rd-4th weeks
Module 3: The First Amendment, the Supreme Court, and Public Education

5th week
Module 4: What? Why? How? (and How Not!) to Teach about Religions in Public Schools

Quiz 1 will be available after completion of Module 4

II. Religions of India

6th week
Module 5: Hinduism

7th week
Module 6: Buddhism

8th week
Module 7: Sikhism

Quiz 2 will be available after completion of Module 7

SPRING BREAK FALLS BETWEEN THE 8TH & 9TH WEEKS OF THE SEMESTER

III. Children of Abraham

9th-10th weeks
Module 8: Judaism

11th-12th weeks
Module 9: Christianity

Quiz 3 will be available after completion of Module 9
13th-14th weeks
Module 10: Islam

15th week
Catch-Up and Review

Quiz 4 will be available after completion of Module 10

16th week
Finals Week

REQUIRED TEXTS

Text #1
Charles C. Haynes, (editor), and Oliver Thomas, (legal editor), Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools. A free download of the 2007 revised edition of this text is available as a PDF on-line at http://www.newseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/rfc_publications_findingcommonground.pdf. We will be reading the Foreword and chapters 1-7; 9; 10; 16; and Appendices B & C. If you prefer not to download this large document, online booksellers also have a limited number of hard copies for sale.

**PLEASE NOTE: BE SURE TO GET THE 2007 EDITION.**

All reading assignments in the Course Content will refer to the 2007 edition. Chapter order and pagination differ from previous editions.

Text #2
Jacob Neusner, (editor), World Religions in America (preferably the Third or Fourth Editions but earlier editions are acceptable. The Third and Fourth Editions have updates and additional chapters that cover more religions, but both old and new editions include the chapters required for our course). Available from the Campus Bookstore (530 898-5222; http://www.bkstr.com/chicostatewildcatstore/shop/textbooks-and-course-materials). Copies are also available from online booksellers.

Text #3

Text # 4
California State Board of Education, History-Social Science Content Standards and Curriculum Frameworks, available online at http://www.cde.ca.gov/BE/ST/

Text # 5
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students should regularly consult Announcements in Blackboard Learn where I will provide updated information regarding the course, instructions, reminders, etc. just as I do during on-campus class meetings. Students will be expected to complete readings and assignments by due dates that will be posted in the course content modules and announced through BbLearn. Assignments will be due before midnight on the due date. Late postings to the discussion areas in BbLearn will not be accepted.

Grades will be based on the following:

Regular Participation in Discussion Groups and Postings to the Discussion Forums in BbLearn worth 20% of the final grade. Each module will pose questions for you to think about and discuss via the Discussion Tool in Learn. Frequently you will be asked to discuss questions among yourselves in small groups, and then post your group's response to a public discussion area. Students will be randomly assigned to groups of 4-5 students for the purpose of these small group discussions and postings. Group members will be expected to comment on one another’s responses to questions and share responsibility for posting the Group’s response to discussion questions. At the end of the semester I will ask each of you to send me a private email rating your own and your fellow group members’ contributions to the work of your small group using a scale of 1-4 with 4 being the highest. I calculate participation grades by considering 1) the quality of the group postings over the course of the semester, 2) the level of activity demonstrated by individual students in the small group discussions over the course of the semester, and 3) your own self-evaluation and the evaluations by fellow group members. Guidelines for discussion postings and online etiquette and an assessment rubric are included at the end of this syllabus.

Four Quizzes covering First Amendment issues and vocabulary, geography, and chronology associated with the religions that we will be studying; each worth 5% of the final grade.
Quizzes will be administered through BbLearn. They will be announced ahead of time, and brief study guides will be provided. Quizzes will be open-book, but timed. Format will be multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, etc. Specific due dates to be announced.

First Paper worth 25% of the final grade.
One paper on an assigned topic having to do with the First Amendment, religion, and the schools. This paper (approximately 750 words or 3 pages in length) will be due after the completion of Module 4 (specific due date to be announced). More detailed instructions will be provided in “Writing Assignments” on the Course Homepage.

Final Research Project worth 35% of the final grade.
This project will involve a field trip to visit to a local religious site along with research that provides background and context for the site visit. The results of your research may be presented in the form of a research paper, an online video, or a website. (Your creative ideas about other ways of presenting your research are welcome, though I ask that you run them by me ahead of time). You may approach this assignment as an individual project, or you may work with other students as a team (maximum 4 students per team). More detailed instructions will be provided in “Writing Assignments” on the Course Homepage.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Papers should be typed and double-spaced and must include references. You may choose to use either the MLA or the Chicago/Turabian style and citation format (see http://libguides.csuchico.edu/citingsources)

Do not assume that your reader is familiar with your topic. Try to anticipate the questions that might arise in a reader’s mind as s/he reads your work, and build the answers to those questions into your discussion. Be as clear and as thorough as you can possibly be.

Be sure to PROOFREAD your work before you turn it in.
Academic Integrity Policy

All quotations and paraphrases in your written work must be properly referenced. Evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and referral to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The University’s policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct can be found at [http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/integrity.shtml](http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/integrity.shtml). The Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities has also established a policy on academic integrity, honesty, and plagiarism. For an explanation of the policy and a tutorial visit: [http://www.csuchico.edu/corh/crel/programs/academic-integrity.shtml](http://www.csuchico.edu/corh/crel/programs/academic-integrity.shtml)

By submitting written assignments, you are indicating that you understand and agree to abide by this policy.

Evaluation of Written Assignments

My evaluation of your written work will concentrate on 1) what you say and 2) how you say it.

1. What you say.  (Is it accurate?  Is it complete and comprehensive?  Does it provide sufficient depth and detail in its exposition and assessment of the material?  Does it provide examples from the readings and class discussions in order to illustrate and support statements and claims?)

2. How you say it.  (Is the discussion sharply focused?  Is it well organized?  Is it clearly and convincingly written?  Is it polished and attentive to detail – free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage, phrasing, etc.?)

Assessment Rubric for Papers

A: Paper responds directly and fully to each question in a precise and compelling fashion. Paper has clear organizational structure; presentation and analysis are well supported by material from course readings that are properly cited. Spelling, diction, and punctuation are consistent with standards of formal academic writing. Paper goes beyond reporting facts to analyze issues in depth and contributes insights that go beyond what has been discussed in class and readings.

B: Paper responds adequately to each question but is not always as precise and polished as it might be. Basic organizational structure is evident; presentation and analysis have some support from reading. Paper exhibits very few errors in spelling, diction, punctuation, and citation format. Paper makes defensible claims but does not always support them as thoroughly as it might have; limited insights beyond what has been discussed in class and readings.

C: Paper responds to questions in a general way but is somewhat lacking in precision and clarity. Presentation and analysis are generally sound but are not supported in as much depth and detail as they might have been. Paper makes minimal reference to readings and/or may include improper citation. Paper exhibits some problems with organization, spelling, diction, and/or punctuation.

D: Paper presents some information clearly but fails to respond to some basic elements of the question. Paper lacks a coherent structure and is incomplete or inaccurate in its presentation and analysis of information. Paper exhibits significant problems with organization, spelling, diction, punctuation, and/or citation format and makes little or no reference to readings.

F: Paper responds to the question minimally or not at all. Paper is disorganized and incomplete or inaccurate in its presentation and analysis of information and makes little or no reference to readings. Paper exhibits significant problems with spelling, diction, and punctuation, and/or citation format; errors in usage of language make the paper difficult to follow.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION POSTINGS AND ONLINE ETIQUETTE

(Adapted from Jon Knolle, formerly Online Operations Coordinator, CSU, Chico)

Discussion topics are for academic purposes and allow students and the instructor to interact regarding course content. Personal conversations and unrelated messages are inappropriate.
No harassment. All students in the online discussion forum should be given the opportunity to express ideas relating to course content and discussions raised in the class session.

The instructor can and will review comments posted in the online discussion area and will comment and clarify as appropriate.

Your grade will be affected if you do not choose to use the online communication tools for the purposes designated here.

The discussion area is a public place. Remember that your messages are being posted in a forum that is available to the entire class, other students can read what you post which means:

Don't post things you wouldn't say in public.

Don't address comments to individuals unless you want the entire class to read the message.

Don't share confidential information in the public forums.

Read your messages before you post them. Once your message is posted, you cannot change it.

Respect for All Participants:

It is expected that participants will respect the views of others in the class in all online conversations, regardless of how different the others' views are from their own.

Expressing opposing points of view can be done with consideration for the feelings of others. If you are upset and want to respond to a controversial posting, a good suggestion is to wait a day before sending your response.

Use of profanity or derogatory comments is not appropriate.

Evaluation of Discussion Board Postings

I will not be assigning a grade to each individual posting in the small group discussion areas, but I will keep track of the quality of each group’s public postings based on the rubric below. As mentioned above under Course Requirements, I calculate participation grades by considering 1) the quality of the group postings over the course of the semester, 2) the level of activity demonstrated by individual students in the small group discussions over the course of the semester, and 3) your own self-evaluation and the evaluations by fellow group members. At the end of the semester I will assign each student an overall grade based on the regularity and quality of postings over the course of the semester, just as I assign a grade for "Attendance and Participation" in my on-campus courses. The following rubric (adapted from EDUC 484, a course on multimedia and web authoring at Sonoma State University) should give you some idea of factors that are considered in assessing the quality of your group participation in the Learn Discussion area. (Obviously, not every one of these standards will be equally relevant for every posting. I include them here to give you a general idea of what you should be aiming for).

Mechanics of Posting

A Complete sentences, well organized, grammatically correct and free of spelling errors

B Complete sentences, well organized, but some grammar and/or spelling errors

C Complete sentences, comprehensible, organization could be improved to present a more coherent argument or statement, has three or more grammar and/or spelling errors per paragraph
D Poor sentence structure inadequate organization, several grammar and/or spelling errors

Participation in Discussion
A Provides comments and new information in a regular and equitable manner. Interacts with a variety of participants
B Provides comments and some new information in a fairly regular manner. Interacts with a few selected participants
C Sporadically provides comments and some new information. Interacts with only one or two participants
D Provides minimal comments and information to other participants

Content of Posting
A Revealed a solid understanding of the topic as evidenced by thoughtful responses and questions
B Revealed an adequate understanding of the topic as evidenced by posts indicating superficial knowledge
C Revealed a restricted understanding of the topic limited to information that could be derived from prior posts
D Message was unrelated to discussion

Critical Thinking Evidenced by Posting
A Offered a critical analysis of an existing posted idea or introduced a different interpretation to an existing idea
B Agreed or disagreed with existing discussion and provided limited justification/explanation
C Agreed or disagreed with existing discussion but provided no justification/explanation
D Provided no evidence of agreement or disagreement with existing discussion