

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

<b>Course Number:</b> SW 360 K	<b>Instructor's Name:</b> Farnaz Masumian
<b>Unique Number:</b> WB (64140)	<b>Office:</b> Social Work Bldg; Room 3.104 A
<b>Semester:</b> Spring 2014	<b>Phone:</b> 512-899-8491
<b>Meeting Time/Place:</b> Web-based (Blackboard)	<b>Office Hours:</b> Thursdays 12:30-1:30
<b>Web Site:</b> <a href="http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/">http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/</a>	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:masumian@mail.utexas.edu">masumian@mail.utexas.edu</a>

**FULL COURSE TITLE**

World Religions

**I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The primary purpose of this course is to promote awareness and appreciation of the diversity of religious thought in the modern world and help students of social work develop spiritual sensitivity in their professional practice. Religious responses to significant spiritual questions such as the nature of humankind, the purpose of life, and the existence of an afterlife will be examined in a comparative religious context to enable students to see how their own spiritual views can strengthen or weaken practitioner-client relationships at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

**II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- Demonstrate understanding of the central teachings and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith, as these faiths relate to social justice.
- Identify and comparatively reflect on religious responses to central questions of humankind such as who are we, why are we here, and where are we going?
- Identify the impact and implications of religious or spiritual perspectives on social justice and social work practice.
- Demonstrate increased self-awareness of how personal value systems can impact one's behavior towards clients of different religious or spiritual backgrounds.

**III. TEACHING METHODS**

This course is entirely web-based. **Instructor lectures** are in the form of **web lessons**. You will find these web lessons on the Blackboard online system under **Course Documents**.

#### IV. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS, AND MATERIALS

##### **Required Textbooks:**

Hopfe, Lewis M., and Mark R. Woodward. *Religions of the World* (12<sup>th</sup> Edition). New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2012.

Masumian Farnaz. *Life after Death: A Study of the Afterlife in World Religions*.

Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2002.

##### **Recommended Textbooks:**

Van Hook, M., Hugen, B., & Aguilar, M. (Eds.). *Spirituality within religious traditions in social work practice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2001.

Masumian, Farnaz & Bijan. *Divine Educators*. Oxford: George Ronald Publishers. 2005.

#### V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to

1. Take **four multiple-choice tests** throughout the semester. These tests will be based on the two required textbooks as well as the **web Lessons that are in lieu** of instructor lectures. These tests will be online and administered via the **UT Blackboard** system under **Course Documents**.
2. Take **seven short multiple-choice website quizzes** (one for each religion covered in the course). These 10-items quizzes will also be online and administered via the **UT Blackboard** system under **Course Documents**. **Here is the list of the websites:**
  - Hinduism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/index.shtml>
  - Buddhism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/index.shtml>
  - Zoroastrianism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/index.shtml>
  - Judaism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/index.shtml>
  - Christianity: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/index.shtml>
  - Islám: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/index.shtml>
  - Bahá'í Faith: <http://www.bahai.org/>

3. Take **seven short True/False videotape quizzes** (one for each religion). Both the videos and the 5-item video quizzes will be online and administered via the **UT Blackboard** system under **Course Documents**

## **VI. CLASS POLICIES**

### ***Withdrawal***

If a student decides to withdraw from this course, it is their responsibility to start and finish the process with the School. Students who remain enrolled in the course will receive a grade based on their work and grades set for in the syllabus. For withdrawal dates, refer to the University's calendar.

### ***Incomplete and Q-Drops***

Incompletes and Q-drops are given under very special documented circumstances and will be decided by the instructor on a case-by-base basis. To apply for an incomplete or Q-drop, first arrange a meeting with me and get approval for filling out an "Incomplete" form and also present a documented plan on how you intend to finish the course. I do not grant "incompletes" or Q-drops easily. A substantial amount of the course work must already be completed before I consider giving an incomplete. The vast majority of my students WILL receive a grade from me based on performance criteria stipulated in the syllabus.

### ***Use of e-mail for official correspondence to students***

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time- sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### ***Use of Blackboard***

In this class the professor uses Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give students online quizzes and surveys. Students can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.

### ***The University of Texas Honor Code***

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### ***Policy on social media and professional communication***

Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including **any** information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in **any** way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

### ***Academic Freedom***

Students taking this class are free to believe in any religion(s) or no religion at all. I do expect all to respect the beliefs of others in the class, even if they completely disagree with them. I will not base grades on a student's belief system but rather on the quality of the work they perform for this course.

### ***Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty***

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the

University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

### ***Documented Disability Statement***

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

### ***Religious holidays***

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### ***Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)***

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call [512-232-5050](tel:512-232-5050) or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### ***FEEDBACK STATEMENT***

(Sample) During this course the professor will ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways, including through anonymous surveys about how the professor's teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning. It is very important for the professor to know the students' reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to respond to these surveys, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.

### ***Emergency evacuation policy***

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor's instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

## **VII. Grading**

- 4 Exams (50%)
- 7 Website quizzes (30%)
- 7 Videotape quizzes (20%)

### **Grading Scale**

94.0 & above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

## VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

**Note:** The dates for tests and quizzes on your syllabus are **ONLY suggested**. In other words, you can take all of them at your own pace as long as you **complete all your work by midnight Tuesday May 6th, 2014**.

### January 15

- Hinduism:
- Religions of the World
- Hinduism Web Lessons

### January 25

- Hinduism:
- Religions of the World
- Hinduism Web Lessons

### January 29

- Buddhism:
- Religions of the World
- Buddhism Web Lessons

### February 5

- ***EXAM # I: Hinduism & Buddhism***
- ***Hinduism & Buddhism website quizzes***
- ***Hinduism & Buddhism videotape quizzes***

### February 6

Zoroastrianism:

- Religions of the World
- Zoroastrianism Web Lessons
- Judaism:
- Religions of the World

### **February 19**

- Judaism:
- Religions of the World
- Judaism Web Lessons

### **February 26**

- ***EXAM # II: Judaism & Zoroastrianism***
- ***Zoroastrianism & Judaism website quizzes***
- ***Zoroastrianism & Judaism videotape quizzes***

### **February 27**

Christianity:

- Religions of the World
- Christianity Web Lessons

### **March 10**

Christianity:

- Religions of the World
- Christianity Web Lessons

### **March 22**

Islam:

- Religions of the World
- Islam Web Lessons

### **April 1**

Islam:

- Religions of the World
- Islam Web Lessons



## **April 9**

- ***EXAM # III: Christianity & Islam***
- ***Christianity & Islam website quizzes***
- ***Christianity & Islam videotape quizzes***

## **April 10**

Bahá'í Faith:

- Religions of the World (**Web Bonus Chapter in some editions**)
- Bahá'í Faith Web Lessons

## **April 15**

- Afterlife in World Religions:
- Life After Death, Chapters 1-5

## **April 22**

- Afterlife in World Religions:
- Life After Death, Chapters 6-10

## **May 6**

- ***EXAM # IV: Bahá'í Faith & the entire "Life After Death" book***
- ***Bahá'í website quiz***
- ***Bahá'í video quiz***