

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

Course Number: SW 360 K	Instructor's Name: Farnaz Masumian
Unique Number: 61755	Office: Social Work Bldg; Room 3.104 A
Semester: Spring 2015	Phone: 512-899-8491
Meeting Time/Place: Web-based (Canvas)	Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-1:30
Web Site: http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/	Email: farnazmasumianut@gmail.com

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 history, central teachings, and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith.
- 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.

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* (12th 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>
 - Islam: <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 Canvas** in the Modules section.

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 Canvas

In this class the professor uses Canvas—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at [Canvas](#) 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.

Professional Conduct in Class

The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

Classroom Civility

A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Social Work deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues.

Unanticipated Distress

Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the instructor. The instructor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students can contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at www.utexas.edu/student/cmhc/.

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.

Use of Class Materials

The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

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.

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>.

Safety

As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

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). 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-
67.0 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 Friday May 8th, 2015**.

January 20

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

January 27

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

February 3

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

February 10

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

February 17

Zoroastrianism:

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

February 24

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

March 3

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

March 10

Christianity:

- Religions of the World
- Christianity Web Lessons

March 24

Islam:

- Religions of the World
- Islam Web Lessons

March 31

Islam:

- Religions of the World
- Islam Web Lessons

April 7

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

April 14

Bahá'í Faith:

- Reading from *Religions of the World* chapter (PDF file on Canvas)
- Bahá'í Faith Web Lessons

April 21

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

April 28

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

May 8

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