

# FYS 033 (CRN 6974): RELIGIONS OF DES MOINES

Drake University  
Fall 2018  
MW 12:30–1:45pm  
Meredith 233

## INSTRUCTOR

- Tim Knepper: tim.knepper@drake.edu
  - Office Hours (in 203 Medbury): W: 2:00-4:00pm, R: 2:00-4:00pm, or by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

- This first-year seminar will introduce students to six of the world's religions through some of their communities of practice in greater Des Moines. We will visit three of these communities in person: Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist. We will read a Drake-student written, photo-narrative about fifteen of these communities: three Jewish, three Christian, three Muslim, two Hindu, two Buddhist, and two Sikh. And we will also read a textbook to learn about these religious traditions in general. In doing all this, our goal is not only to learn about how each of these communities particularizes the practices and teachings of their religions but also to see what these particularities have to teach us about the nature of religion in general.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To learn the basic practices and beliefs of six of the world's religions, focusing on how those practices and beliefs take form in Des Moines.
- To reflect on how religion gets "lived" (as opposed to believed or taught).
- To reflect on how religion gets "lived" in Des Moines (as opposed to elsewhere).
- To reflect on the nature of religion, especially in light of how religion is lived in Des Moines.
- And, more broadly, to learn to read texts critically and empathetically, to learn to research topics insightfully and thoroughly, to learn to write papers cogently and coherently, and to learn to engage ideas and others in a seminar setting with clarity and considerateness.

## REQUIRED TEXT

- Timothy D. Knepper and Bob Blanchard, *A Spectrum of Faith: Religions of the World in America's Heartland* (Drake Community Press, 2017): ISBN: 0692855157
- (I will also make available digitized copies of Mary Pat Fisher's 6<sup>th</sup> edition of *Living Religion* (Prentice Hall, 2005, ISBN: 0131933159)

## REQUIRED SITE VISITS

- Student are required to attend three site visits to local religious communities; see course schedule.

## DISABILITY STATEMENT

- If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations, please see me. Accommodations are coordinated through Student Disability Services. Please contact Michelle Laughlin, Director of Student Disability Service at 281-1835 or michelle.laughlin@drake.edu.

## DISCLAIMER

- I reserve the right to revise the syllabus at any point in time should I deem it in your best interest.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Three Papers (45% total, 15% each)**
  - Student is responsible for writing three papers, each approximately four pages in length (double-spaced), with proper citations and bibliography. Student is also responsible for “presenting” these papers in class on their due dates. Papers will require a modest amount of research of non-required sources (some of which cannot be from the internet). Paper questions will be distributed approximately one week prior to due dates. Papers will be graded on the basis of content (6 points), strength of argument (6 points), and clarity of expression (3 points). *Except in the case of extreme circumstances, late papers will be penalized by 1 point per day.*
- **Nine Reading Responses (27% total: 3% each)**
  - Student is responsible for writing (and posting to Blackboard) a total of 9 reading responses (out of 18 opportunities), each of which must be for a different reading assignment. Reading responses are due by midnight (12:00 am) on the day that the reading assignments will be discussed. They should engage the reading material, citing therefrom. And they should also contain a topic or question for class discussion (which the student will be responsible for raising in class, time permitting). They should be written in response to one of the reading threads created by the professor. And they should be approximately one, double-spaced page in length. They will be graded as check-plus (3 points) or check (2 points) or check-minus (1 point) based on their accurate understanding of and thoughtful engagement with the reading material. *Reading responses will only be accepted for classes that you actually attend.*
- **Two Site-Visit Analyses (8% total, 4% each)**
  - Student is responsible for writing two site-visit analyses, each of which must be for one of our scheduled site-visits. Analyses should consist of one page of description of (some of) the events that transpired and one page of analysis of these events by means of the readings and discussions of the class, with a particular focus on our central theme lived religion. Analyses are due by the next scheduled class after the site visit. Analyses will be graded in two categories: accuracy of description (2 points), and insight of analysis (2 points).
- **Overall Course Contribution (20%)**
  - Student is responsible for contributing to the course in general. Although this encompasses a number of things, it primarily involves preparation for and participation in the classroom. Note that this means more than just coming to class and doing the reading responses—it means actually contributing to the well-working of the course. Still, it is strongly recommended that students attend each and every class. Reasonably excused absences (e.g., religious observances, medical appointments, interview trips, and athletic and musical trips) will be permitted, provided that you notify me about them, provide documentation (when appropriate), and make up any work that you miss. *You are responsible for everything that occurs during classes that you miss.*

## BLACKBOARD

- This course will utilize Blackboard in at least four ways: (1) students *will* post reading and dialogue responses to the “discussion board” (see above) (2) students *may* post informal (and, if desired, anonymous) course evaluations to the “discussion board” (see below); (3) professor *will* post grades to the “gradebook;” (4) professor *will* post reading hints to the “announcements” (see below).

## COURSE FEEDBACK

- I am teaching this course for you. This means that if something about it is not “working” for you in such a way that significantly hinders your learning experience, I want to know about it so that I can at least try to fix it. To this end, I will do two things: (1) invite you to write informal evaluations in class from time to time; (2) invite you to post informal evaluations to the discussion board of Blackboard anytime you so desire. Both may be done anonymously.

## STUDYING RELIGION

- The academic study of religion is not the confessional practice of religion. When we study religion in the university, we do so from a perspective that is as impartial and objective as possible. This involves, in my opinion, an attitude of critical empathy—empathy in that it attempts to understand and appreciate religious beliefs and practices from the perspective of the practitioner, but also critical in that it attempts to understand and appreciate these beliefs and practices as objectively as possible.

## READING RELIGION (READING HINTS)

- Reading about culturally and historically distant ideas and practices can be difficult, particularly when unfamiliar, technical terms are involved. I will post reading hints under the “announcements” section of Blackboard that should help focus your reading of the assignments. Still, these readings will still require time and attention. Budget your time and determine your reading space accordingly.

## FIRST YEAR SEMINARS AND WRITING

- First year seminars, as you may already know, are designed to facilitate your adjustment to intellectual life at Drake. More elaborately, they “are intended to provide an optimum environment for promoting intellectual inquiry and growth among first year students by fostering a sense of community among class members, encouraging active participation and collaboration in the conduct of the class, and fostering the development of skills in creative thinking, critical analysis, and effective communication.” For more FYS info: <http://www.drake.edu/dc/firstyearseminarfys/studenthomepage/>.
- In particular, first year seminars should help you learn how to write like a college student. To such an end, I will be assigning a number of different writing assignments, each of which you will have the opportunity to rewrite. (Note, though, that rewritten papers must be entirely rewritten, i.e., not just *corrected*.) For help with your writing, see me. (Note that I might require some of you also to see a writing tutor at the Writing Workshop: <http://www.drake.edu/english/studentresources/writingworkshop/>). As for citations, I do not care which format you use, just as long as you are consistent. (I encourage you to learn the style of your discipline/major.)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- There are too many good resources in Cowles (both in stacks and in reference) to list them all. You really need to check them out for yourself! So, here I’ll just make three quick comments:
- *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Lindsay Jones, ed.) contains a vast number of entries on many different aspects of the world’s religions written by leading scholars of religion. (And the other encyclopedias of religion in the reference section are probably useful too.)
- I don’t know of a credible on-line encyclopedia or dictionary of religion. Both the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy ([iep.utm.edu](http://iep.utm.edu)) and Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ([plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu)) sometimes provide scholarly articles on *religious* philosophers and philosophies. Please exercise caution when using websites that are not written by identified scholars or are written by passionate practitioners.
- Cowles subscribes to the ATLA Religion Database, the premier index of articles and books written in the discipline of religious studies. ATLA will allow you to search all the books and articles ever written on any given subject matter pertaining to religion. (Philosopher’s Index will do the same for philosophy.)

## +/- GRADING

- This course will use +/- grading. This is how I understand it working: A+ = 97–100, A = 93–96, A- = 90–92, B+ = 87–89, B = 83–86, B- = 80–82, and so forth.

## ACADMIC CONDUCT: PLAGIARISM

- Plagiarism will be taken very seriously in this class. Plagiarized papers will be automatically failed. Second offenses *will* result in failure of the course and *may* result in academic probation or expulsion.
- **My own rule:** If you use an author's ideas, whether verbatim or not, cite that author. If those ideas are "common knowledge," there is no need to cite—unless those ideas are copied word-for-word. If those ideas are not common knowledge, then you must cite.
- **The A&S Policy** (<http://www.drake.edu/studentlife/handbook-resources/handbook/academic/>):
  - Academic dishonesty is an all-encompassing term involving any activity that seeks to gain credit for work one has not done or to deliberately damage or destroy the work of others. It includes plagiarism (the misrepresentation, either by intent or negligence, of another's ideas, phrases, discourse, or works as one's own); cheating (the act, or attempted act, of giving or obtaining aid and/or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirement, including examinations); fabrication (intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic sense in any academic exercise); and facilitating academic dishonesty (intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty). Examples of such cases include, but are not limited to:
    1. copying from the Internet and representing it as one's own thoughts or work;
    2. copying from another student's paper, laboratory report, or other report, or computer files or listing and representing it as one's own thoughts or work;
    3. using, during a test or laboratory experiment, material and/or devices not authorized by the instructor in charge;
    4. without the instructor's permission, collaborating with another, knowingly assisting another or knowingly receiving the assistance of another in writing an examination or in satisfying any other course requirements;
    5. incorporating into written assignments materials written by others without giving them credit, or otherwise improperly using information written by others (including that which might be stored on computer disks or other technological devices), or submitting commercially prepared papers as one's own;
    6. submission of multiple copies of the same or similar papers without prior approval of the several instructors involved;
    7. claiming as one's own work that which was done by tutors or others with no mention of credit to or the assistance of those persons;
    8. deliberately damaging or destroying another's laboratory experiments, computer work or studio work;
    9. knowingly obtaining access to, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release;
    10. substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for oneself, to take a test or other assignment or to make a presentation;
    11. intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise;
    12. forgery, alterations, or misuse of University documents;
    13. falsifying information submitted or failure to reveal relevant information in any University application form or offering any false information in any University disciplinary proceeding.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Introduction

- 08.27 (M): Introduction to Course
- 08.29 (W): Introduction to Religion and the Study of Religion
  - Reading (1): *Living Religions (LR)*, pp. 1–28 (intro)
- 09.03 (M): NO CLASS – Labor Day

### Section I: Islam and Judaism

- 09.05 (W): Islam 1: Early history, practices, beliefs
  - Reading (2): *LR*, pp. 362–392
- 09.10 (M): Islam 2: Spread of Islam, Islam and modernity/West
  - Reading (3): *LR*, pp. 392–416
- 09.12 (W): Islam 3: Islam in Des Moines
  - Reading (4): *SoF*, pp. 1–8, 57–64, 97–104
- **09.14 (F 1:15 pm): Field trip to Shafia Islamic and Cultural Center (1425 University Ave, DSM)**
- 09.17 (M): Library Trip
- 09.19 (W): Judaism 1: History
  - Reading (5): *LR*, pp. 226–261
- 09.24 (M): Judaism 2: Practice and belief
  - Reading (6): *LR*, pp. 261–283
- 09.26 (W): Judaism 3: Judaism in Des Moines
  - Reading (7): *SoF*, pp. 33–40, 73–80, 105–112
- 10.01 (M): Discussion Day
- **10.03 (W): PAPER 1 DUE**

### Section II: Sikhism and Hinduism

- **10.07 (Sn, 11:30am): Site Visit: Iowa Sikh Association (1115 Walnut St., West Des Moines)**
- 10.08 (M): Sikhism 1
  - Reading (8) *LR*, pp. 417–439
- 10.10 (W): Sikhism 2: Sikhism in Des Moines
  - Reading (9): *SoF*, pp. 49–56, 89–96
- 10.15 (M): NO CLASS – Fall Recess
- 10.17 (W): NO CLASS

- 10.22 (M): Hinduism 1: History and texts
  - Reading (10): *LR*, pp. 69–94
- 10.24 (W): Hinduism 2: Practices and modern Hinduism
  - Reading (11): *LR*, pp. 94–115
- 10.29 (M): Hinduism 3: Hinduism in Des Moines
  - Reading (12): *SoF*, pp. 25–32, 81–88
- 10.31 (W): Discussion Day
- **11.04 (Sn, TBD): Site Visit to Zen Center (6901 SW 14th Street, Des Moines)**
- **11.05 (M): PAPER 2 DUE**

### **Section III: Buddhism and Christianity**

- 11.07 (W): Buddhism 1: Early Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism
  - Reading (13): *LR*, pp. 129–150
- 11.12 (M): Buddhism 2: Mahayana Buddhism, Modern/Western Buddhism
  - Reading (14): *LR*, 150–175
- 11.14 (W): Buddhism 3: Buddhism in Des Moines
  - Reading (15): *SoF*, pp. 9–16, 81–88
- 11.19 (M): NO CLASS
- 11.21 (W) NO CLASS — Thanksgiving Recess
- 11.26 (M): Christianity 1: Early history
  - Reading (16): *LR*, pp. 284–324
- 11.28 (W): Christianity 2: Later history, practice and belief
  - Reading (17): *LR*, pp. 324–361
- 12.03 (M): Christianity 3: Christianity in Des Moines
  - Reading (18): *SoF*, pp. 17–24, 65–72, 113–120
- 12.05 (W): Discussion Day
- **12.10 (M, 9:30–11:20am): PAPER 3 DUE**