Instructor: Marc Unger  
Office Location & Office Hours: See [http://webapps.spcollege.edu/instructors/id/unger.marc](http://webapps.spcollege.edu/instructors/id/unger.marc)  
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E-mail: unger.marc@spcollege.edu  
Academic Department: Humanities and Fine Arts

Course Description

**REL 2300 World Religions**: Prerequisite: ENC 0025 or EAP 1695 or satisfactory score on the SPC placement test. This course examines the general characteristics of the major religions of the world. Topics include the nature of religion, Indigenous Religions, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Christianity, Islam and New Religious Movements. Each is examined in its cultural context, how basic human concerns are addressed, the way purpose for life is defined, and the uniqueness of religious practice. This course partially satisfies the writing requirements outlined in the General Education Requirements and Enhanced World View Requirements. 47 contact hours.

Major Learning Outcomes

1. The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major religions of the world.  
2. The student will display an understanding of the relationship between cultural mores and religious practice.  
3. The student will identify the way religion contributes to social unity and integrity.  
4. The student will analyze basic religious concepts.  
5. The student will display an understanding of the difference between religious experience and religious dogma.

Required Text, Resources, & Supplies

**Resources**: Access to MyCourses - [https://mycourses.spcollege.edu](https://mycourses.spcollege.edu)  
**Supplies**: 5 ScanTrons (and a #2 pencil) for Exams

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. By signing up for this course, you have agreed that you are available during the time assigned for our class meetings. In other words, you have made all of the necessary arrangements to be present at each class meeting. In order to be considered present during the first week of the semester, you must complete the first worksheet. For 60% attendance, you must complete at least 1 Unit Exam. However, do not assume that I have dropped you for excessive absences! If you decide you do not want to be in this class, it is your responsibility to withdraw. Attendance may be considered in the case of borderline grades. Also, being late to class and leaving class early can be counted as an absence.

Special Accommodations

St. Petersburg College recognizes the importance of equal access to learning opportunities for all students. Accessibility Services (AS) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. learning disability, ADD/ADHD, psychiatric, medical/orthopedic, vision, and/or hearing), are invited to contact the Accessibility Coordinator (AC) that serves your campus for a confidential discussion. To find your AC for your specific campus, please go to the Accessibility Services website: [https://www.spcollege.edu/accessibility](https://www.spcollege.edu/accessibility)

Course Grade

In this course you are accumulating points towards a maximum of 700. Your final grade will be based upon the total number of points you accumulate on the assigned assessments only. There will be **no extra credit** in this
course to accumulate more points. As long as you have earned a combined 140 points (70%) on the two Writing Assignments (noted with * below), your course grade will be based on the following point distribution:

**Quizzes & Class Activities:** Top 20 @ 5 points = 100 points (maximum that can be earned is 100)

**Unit Exams:** 4 @ 100 points = 400 points

**Final Examination (optional):** 1 @ 100 (to replace the single lowest Unit Exam points)

*Writing Assignments:* 2 @ 100 points each = 200

**Total Points = 700**

If you do not have at least 140 out of 200 points on your Writing Assignments (the equivalent of a 70% average) you can only receive a grade of “D” or “F” in this course (regardless of your overall point total). If you have met this requirement, the following grading scale will apply:

- A - 630-700 points (90% to 100% of points available)
- B - 560-629 points (80% to 89% of points available)
- C - 490-559 points (70% to 79% of points available)
- D - 420-489 points (60% to 69% of points available)
- F - below 420 points (less than 60% of points available)

The Incomplete Grade: An “I” grade may be assigned to complete required course work only if the student was prevented from completing the course work due to non-academic reasons. I may require documentation to assist in the decision. The “I” grade will only be considered when the student has completed at least 80% of the graded course assignments and is passing the course at the time of request. All work must be completed by the end of the subsequent term. If the work is not completed within the prescribed timeframe, the “I” will automatically change to an “F” grade.

Graded Assignments

1. **Quizzes & Class Activities (20 @ 5 points each for 100 points total):** Class sessions will consist primarily of lectures, though lectures will be supplemented by audio-visual aids, quizzes, and other in-class work. There will be between 25 and 30 different activities during the semester of which only the top 20 activity scores will be used for grading purposes. *Graded in-class activities that you miss cannot be made up.* These activities are only valid at the time during the class period in which they are administered. In other words, if you are not present at the time of the activity for any reason, you cannot submit it later for credit. You are encouraged to bring your textbook to class as these are all open-resource activities.

2. **Unit Exams (4 @ 100 points for 400 points total):** There will be 4 non-cumulative closed-book objective exams (50 questions each) covering specific units of material as outlined in the course calendar (page 4 of this syllabus). Since our schedule requires that 2 exams be completed in the same class period, you will be permitted to have 1 sheet (8½ X 11) of handwritten notes (front and back) for each set of exams (that is, 1 piece of paper for Units 1&2 Exams; and 1 piece of paper for Units 3&4 Exams). No typed or photocopied notes, handwritten only (unless typed has been approved by Accessibility Services as a reasonable accommodation). The instructor must approve your sheet prior to use during the exam, and it is to be turned in with the exam (you will get it back later).

3. **Final Examination (optional):** The Final Examination is a cumulative objective closed-book assessment (50 questions) that is administered during the assigned Final Exam time period (see here for date and time: [http://www.spcollege.edu/FinalExamSchedule/](http://www.spcollege.edu/FinalExamSchedule/)). Unlike the unit exams, *no notes are permitted.* A Study Guide is available in MyCourses. The purpose of this exam is to replace the single lowest Unit Exam points. In other words, the points earned on this exam will replace the points earned on your lowest Unit Exam attempt (Units 1-4).

4. **Writing Assignments (2 at 100 points each for 200 points)** Students enrolled in REL 2300 will be required to compose and submit two (2) original written assignments that respond to specific topics assigned by the instructor. The complete assignment instructions are located in the “Course Content” in MyCourses under the heading “Writing Assignments.” The assignment will be submitted to a drop box in
MyCourses that is linked to Turnitin.com®. Turnitin.com is a teaching tool that allows you to see how closely your writing matches source materials. If you choose not to use this service, you must contact the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester to make alternate submission arrangements. Failure to do so by this time indicates that you agree to submit your assignments in this manner.

**Original Writing**
All written work must represent the students’ original writing. “Original Writing” means the unique and creative written composition of the student using his/her own words and produced using his/her own writing skills. The use of modified third-party text in this course is not considered original writing and will result in a reduced score for the assignment or the rejection of the work submitted. In a college course where individual thinking is a goal, you need to have the skill of transforming what you read into original writing. Think of it as a conversation about a topic that you are having with someone at a gathering. Do you string together sentences and phrases that you read or do you explain it in your own words? Likewise, your writing needs to demonstrate that you understand the material to the point of explaining it to someone without the book in front of you. When you provide a response that strings together the sentences of your sources, you are only demonstrating that you have the ability to find the answer, not that you understand it. Reading source material should initiate original thoughts in your mind that are tied to your understanding of the world around you. The resulting responses should have your specific take on the main ideas. For college-level writing competency, I encourage you to visit the following sites to help develop these skills: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/)

**Policies**
**Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on exam or assignment; failure in course; and/or expulsion from the college. You may not seek or receive assistance from another on any graded assessment in this course. Additionally, all written work must represent your own original writing. For more information, refer to the "Academic Dishonesty" policy in the SPC Student Handbook.

**Classroom Behavior:** In accordance with College policy, “each student's behavior is expected to contribute to a positive learning/teaching environment, respecting the rights of others and their opportunity to learn. No student has the right to interfere with the teaching/learning process. The instructor has the authority to ask a disruptive student to leave a classroom.” Please remember to be respectful of those around you.

**Laptops and earbuds/headphones in the Classroom:** Computer use in the classroom setting will not be necessary; therefore, the use of a laptop computer during class time is not permitted. You also should not use earbuds/headphones in association with any device during class time unless necessary as an approved accommodation.

**Syllabus Addendum:** All information at the following link also applies to this course: [https://go.spcollege.edu/Addendum/](https://go.spcollege.edu/Addendum/)

**Emergency Preparedness Procedures**
The College realizes that it is possible for a significant natural disaster to compromise SPC campus facilities sufficiently to disrupt the delivery of classes on campus for an extended period of time. In the event this happens, this class will continue in an online format without disruption.

**The Syllabus as Our Contract**
If you do not or cannot agree to the conditions and requirements stated in this syllabus, you must contact me by the end of the second week of the semester to discuss and/or make alternate plans. Failure to do so by this time indicates that you understand and agree to abide by the conditions of this course as described in the syllabus.

**A Message from the Instructor**
Religion can be a very passionate and controversial subject. In this course, it is important that there be an exchange of ideas about a theme or religious tradition, while allowing others to have a different opinion. We all have our innate free will. We also all have an innate understanding that in a broad way, we are all brothers and sisters of humanity. Please be sensitive and avoid being smug, sarcastic, or judgmental about another person’s
religion, or “non-religion.” This class is not the place to criticize, convert or demean others. Each religion has its critics, just as each religion has its faithful adherents. Each religion has examples of pious and good people who are wonderful examples of the faith; however, each religion also has its share of “bad examples” who are not immune from the baser side of humanity’s character spectrum. Like our actions, character itself is a choice.

In this course, we will approach each religion in an academic scholarly way. This involves understanding the terms and concepts associated with the study of religions. Each student should acquire a knowledge base of diverse religious traditions that includes founders, major divisions, scriptures, myths, rituals, ethics, and concepts of sacred reality and experience. With this understanding, you should be able to describe how religious traditions contribute to an understanding of people, cultures, nations, and art.

This class will require a good amount of reading, writing, and studying. **It is a good idea to plan a routine study-time, and stay on top of the work.** You cannot cram for this course at the last minute, any more than a farmer can cram for a bountiful crop by planting seeds the night before the harvest. If you do not set aside time for your academic pursuits, who will?

### Tentative Time Schedule (Subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tentative Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Introduction to REL 2300 &amp; The Big Picture</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Indigenous Religions</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>February 5</strong></td>
<td>Hinduism &amp; Jainism</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Chinese Indigenous Religions &amp; Daoism</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Confucianism &amp; Shinto</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>March 5</strong></td>
<td>Unit 1 and Unit 2 Exams</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>March 12</strong></td>
<td>Spring Break – No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>Zoroastrianism</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 9</td>
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<td>March 26</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April 2</strong></td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Writing Assignment 2 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Christianity &amp; Islam</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>Sikhism &amp; Baha’i</td>
<td>Reading: Textbook Chapter 6 &amp; the Baha’i materials in MyCourses</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April 30</strong></td>
<td>Unit 3 and Unit 4 Exams</td>
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**Tuesday, May 7, 7:00pm-8:50pm: Optional Final Exam**

**Exam 1:** Covers the Introduction material & terminology, Indigenous Religions, Hinduism, and Jainism.

**Exam 2:** Covers Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto.

**Exam 3:** Covers Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity.

**Exam 4:** Covers Islam, Sikhism, and Baha’i.

**Final Exam:** Covers all major world religions (see separate study guide)