



WAYLAND BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

VIRTUAL CAMPUS

SCHOOL OF RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Mission: Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging and distinctively Christian environment for professional success and service to God and humankind.

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE

PHIL/RLGN 5310 World Religions

TERM AND DATES

Fall 2017 Aug 21-Nov 4, 2017

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, OFFICE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS

Dr. J. M. Givens Jr.

Professor of Religion and Philosophy

Director of the Online Religion Programs

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Instant Messaging available through Blackboard IM (download through Tools section)

OFFICE HOURS

Flores Bible Building office suite

Mon 10:00-11:00; 1:30-4:30; Tues 9:30-11:00; 2:00-4:00; Wed 10:00-11:00; 1:00-4:00; Thurs 9:30-11:00; Fri 10:00-11:00 CST/CDT (phone and instant messaging)

*Other times available by email and/or appointment; **Cell phone for emergencies***

CLASS MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

Asynchronous interaction with specific deadlines; Virtual Campus Blackboard website

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research in the origin, personalities, historical development, and basic thought of major religions of the world.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COURSE NUMBERS

None.

REQUIRED RESOURCE MATERIALS

A. STUDENT TEXTBOOKS

1. Charles E. Farhadian, *Introducing World Religions*, Baker
2. Gerald McDermott, *Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? Jesus, Revelation, and Religious Traditions*, InterVarsity Press
3. Bible, any modern translation recognized by mainstream Christianity (if unsure, check with instructor)

Texts and ISBN information available from WBU bookstore

(<http://bookstore.wbu.edu/virtualcampus>). Either e-book or soft/hardcovers are fine.

B. INTERNET RESOURCES

Students will need access to an internet-enabled computer.

1. *WBU Blackboard Course Management Software*
 - a. All assignments and other class issues will be available through Blackboard.
 - b. Blackboard website URL: <http://wbu.blackboard.com>
 - c. Login password: WBU student identification number
 - d. Login username: first 3 letters of first name + first 3 of last name (unless you have used Blackboard previously and have changed your password)
 - e. 24/7 support by phone or chat on log in page
2. *WBU Mabee Learning Resources Center*
 - a. Research papers; additional personal study
 - b. LRC website: <http://library.wbu.edu>.
 - c. Distance learning resources (e-books; books sent via priority mail; online articles): <http://wbu.libguides.com/DistanceStudents>.
 - d. Questions on LRC and research texts: lrcref@wbu.edu.

Optional Materials (Recommended Reading, Not Required for Course)

1. Terry Muck & Frances S. Adeney, *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century*, Baker
Explores issues related to Christian witness to other faith traditions.
2. Gerald McDermott, *God's Rivals: Why Has God Allowed Different Religions? Insights from the Bible and the Early Church*, InterVarsity
Explores perspectives from the Bible and early Christian theologians on the existence of other faiths and how Christians should approach these faiths in witness and interaction.

COURSE OUTCOME COMPETENCIES

The student will:

1. be able to identify the fundamental beliefs and define the basic vocabulary of the major world religions
2. be able to discuss the significant historical events, persons, and groups related to the origin and development of the major world religions
3. be able to identify areas of commonality and difference between Christianity and the other major world religions which might promote an effective witness

4. encounter and interact with adherents of other faith communities

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

1. Online attendance is defined fully in the university catalog: <http://catalog.wbu.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=77#Graduate Policies and Procedures>
2. Students are expected to participate in all required instructional activities in their courses.
3. Student "attendance" in an online course is defined as active participation in the course as described in the course syllabus (completing weekly assignments).
4. Students aware of necessary absences must inform the professor with as much advance notice as possible in order to make appropriate arrangements.
5. Any student absent 25 percent or more of the online course, i.e., non-participatory during 3 or more weeks of an 11 week term, may receive an F for that course.
6. Any student who has not actively participated in an online class prior to the census date for any given term is considered a "no-show" and will be administratively withdrawn from the class without record. To be counted as actively participating, it is not sufficient to log in and view the course. The student must be submitting work as described in the course syllabus.
7. When a student reaches a number of absences considered by the instructor to be excessive, the instructor will submit a Report of Unsatisfactory Progress to the student's WBU student email account and to appropriate university personnel.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Wayland Baptist University observes a zero tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty. Per university policy as described in the academic catalog, all cases of academic dishonesty will be reported and second offenses will result in suspension from the university.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. The Coordinator of Counseling Services serves as the coordinator of students with a disability and should be contacted concerning accommodation requests at (806) 291- 3765. Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

1. *Weekly Farhadian Discussion.* Student interaction through class discussion enhances learning and understanding. (See the Attendance Policy for issues related to grade.) Students will read the assigned chapter from Farhadian's text. Discussion boards and Wikis will be used for class interaction on the material in the chapter. Initial posts should be substantive, informative, or should enhance the learning experience. Interaction is expected, so subsequent responses to student posts or to instructor inquiries, and questions to others about their posts to gain clarity or further understanding of their perspective will be part of the evaluation. See grading rubric for expectations.

2. *Weekly Investigation Discussion.* Students will have the opportunity to explore one or more aspects of each religion in more detail through additional readings, web content, videos, or other means. The intent of these explorations is to allow students the opportunity to engage areas of interest as well as to see how the religion is lived out or impacts practitioners. Interaction with classmates is not expected but reading their posts would be informative. See grading rubric for expectations.
3. *Weekly McDermott Discussion.* Student interaction through class discussion enhances learning and understanding. (See the Attendance Policy for issues related to grade.) Students will read the assigned chapter from McDermott and post a question for discussion from the reading. Students will then answer at least two of their classmates' posted questions during the discussion period (the assigned week and following week). Student questions should generate discussion on one or more key topic in the chapter. They should not be either "yes/no" or content oriented ("what did he say about . . .") but should push classmates to reflect on the material as it relates to the study of religions or to life and/or connect the material to the Farhadian text. Student responses to classmates' questions should demonstrate critical reflection and should be substantive, informative, and enhance the learning experience. Students should interact with classmates responding to their initial question as well as respond to follow up questions from classmates and instructors on their other posts. See grading rubric for expectations.

NOTE on all Discussion Assignments: Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, students are encouraged to think aloud and to be honest about their theological perspectives and concerns. Students should respect the views of their peers, addressing any concerns or questions about another's views with charity and compassion, so that the whole body of Christ might be built up (Eph. 4:11-15).

4. *Field Trip (Experiential Learning).* Students will attend worship services/meetings of other faiths to provide an opportunity to encounter "real-life" adherents of other religions rather than just scholarly statements/analysis of these religions. A report will be submitted for the visit. Details of the report will be posted in Blackboard. **One field trip is required. Extra credit** will be available to students for additional field trips with accompanying reports.

MAKEUPS. Students should **plan early** to complete the required trips. Organizations must be approved by instructor **prior** to attendance. Students need to **contact instructor immediately** if they foresee that they will have difficulties completing this assignment so that the instructor can assist in resolving the issue or in developing an alternative exercise.

5. *Research Project.* All students will write a research paper of 8-12 pages of text (not counting frontal material or bibliography) about one of the following two topics of the student's choice.

Option 1: Future Christian witness

Select one world religion to research. The paper should do the following:

- Identify the main beliefs and/or practices in the religion that will serve as barriers to a Christian witness (that is, impediments or contradictory views).
- Identify the main beliefs and/or practices in the religion that could serve as a bridge for Christian witness (that is, help explain or understand the gospel).
- Discuss methods/ways to communicate the gospel in terms, concepts, methods, and/or practices that will take advantage of the bridges and address the barriers in order to facilitate understanding, conversion, and/or discipleship for members of the studied religion. Especially with the barriers, you should discuss whether these need to be address pre- or post-conversion, and whether they must be rejected in total or if there is a way to accommodate the issue. (For example, should a Hindu belief in reincarnation be address before conversion? Or should the Chinese veneration of ancestors be accommodated or rejected, and if accommodated, how?)

Option 2: Past Interreligious Encounters

Select two or more world religions that have interacted with each other. The paper should do the following:

- Discuss the history of encounter between the two religions
- What type(s) of encounter was there? (cooperative; hostile; dominating; etc.)
- What role(s) did government play in the encounter(s)? (pluralism; imperial support of one; imperial persecution of one or both; etc.)
- How was each religion impacted by the encounter(s)? Did ideas or practices modify through encounter? Explain.
- What lessons can be learned from the encounter(s) for Christian mission and political pluralism (many religions living in one state)?
- Select one (the dates may be narrowed in consultation with instructor)
 - ◇ Judaism and Zoroastrianism in Babylon and Persia (6th-4th cents BC)
 - ◇ Hinduism and Buddhism in India (250 BC-AD 250)
 - ◇ Confucianism and Daoism(and Buddhism?) in China (2nd cent BC – 3rd cent AD)
 - ◇ Judaism and Christianity in the Roman Empire (1st-4th cents AD)
 - ◇ Oriental Christianity and Islam (and Judaism?) in Abbasid Caliphate (8th-13th cents AD)
 - ◇ Catholic Christianity and Islam in the Crusades (11th-13th cents AD)
 - ◇ Christianity, Judaism, and Islam on the Iberian Peninsula (10th-17th cents AD)

Research must utilize a minimum of ten sources, preferably both primary and secondary sources, from published works, journal articles (at least one), and approved Internet resources. Students must secure instructor approval of Internet resources prior to their use in papers, and may only use one Internet source in the paper unless more are allowed by the instructor. Your two required texts may be used in your paper but do not count toward the minimum number of resources.

6. *Examination.* There will be a final exam for the course. The questions will be over reading assignments, handouts and other material provided by the instructor, and class discussion. Further instructions will be posted on Blackboard prior to the exam.

MAKEUPS. Students *must* secure prior permission to take the exam at a time other than the scheduled testing period. Because the testing is given over a period of time, late testing will *only* be allowed in the most unusual of circumstances. Lack of preparation or planning does not constitute an emergency situation.

7. *Extra Credit.* As stated above, additional field trips may be completed (including reports) for extra credit in the course. In addition, students “on the bubble” between two grades will be evaluated for overall community development during the term. How frequent/helpful were their interactions on the weekly discussion board? How much did they participate in non-graded discussions, such as prayer requests or religion in the news? How much additional effort did they demonstrate on assignments such as the scavenger hunt? These could help push a student over the edge of a grade break.

GRADING CRITERIA

1. Weekly Farhadian discussion.....	20%
2. Weekly Exploration discussion	10%
3. Weekly McDermott discussion	10%
4. Field trip report.....	10%
5. Research project	25%
6. Examination	25%

Students shall have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the Academic Catalog. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the Executive Vice President/Provost to the Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee may instruct that the course grade be upheld, raised, or lowered to a more proper evaluation.

COURSE CONTENT & OUTLINE

Week 1	The Persistence of Religion – Farhadian ch 1 Evangelicals and the World Religions – McDermott ch 1
Week 2	Hinduism – Farhadian ch 2 What is Revelation? – McDermott ch 2
Week 3	Buddhism – Farhadian ch 3

	Biblical Suggestions – McDermott ch 3
Week 4	Jainism – Farhadian ch 4
	Theological Considerations – McDermott ch 4
Week 5	Taoism and Confucianism – Farhadian ch 6
	An Old Pattern: Christian Theologians Who Plundered the Egyptians – McDermott ch 5
Week 6	Judaism – Farhadian ch 7
	Buddhist No-Self and No-Mind – McDermott ch 6
Week 7	Christianity – Farhadian ch 8
	A Daoist [Taoist] Theology of Camouflage – McDermott ch 7
Week 8	Islam – Farhadian ch 9
	The Confucian Commitment to Virtue – McDermott ch 8
Week 9	Research paper due
	Muhammad and the Signs of God – McDermott ch 9
Week 10	Sikhism – Farhadian ch 5
	In Conclusion: Objections and Responses – McDermott ch 10
Week 11	Field trip report due; Final exam

INSTRUCTOR'S CONFESSIONAL STATEMENT

The following will help you understand the instructor's view about World Religions. It is the instructor's belief that God is triune—Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son is the Word of God, bearing witness and revealing the Father to the world (John 1:18). The Spirit enables humans to understand and act upon the revelation of the Word of God (John 16:13). The Word gives light to every human in the world (John 1:3), though never as clearly as in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God's final Word (Heb 1:2). In Jesus, the Word became flesh (John 1:14), and we have beheld the fullness of God (Col 1:19), the exact representation of his being (Heb 1:3). Without this final Word—i.e., the gospel of Jesus Christ—the Spirit is limited in helping humans understand the witness of the Word of God that comes to every human (Eph 3:5). With the proclamation of the gospel, however, the Spirit of God is poured out on all flesh in power (Acts 10:45). Thus, it is central to the Christian life to bear witness to the Word of God, so that all might know him and respond to him (Acts 1:8).

The instructor is also committed to the historic position of Baptists that religious liberty is for all . . . including his students. 😊

Let them be heretics, Turks [i.e., Muslims], Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them.

— Thomas Helwys, British Baptist and author of *The Mystery of Iniquity*, the first defense of religious liberty in the English language; quoted in *Baptist Theologians* by Timothy George and David Dockery (1990, p. 15).

The liberty I contend for, is more than toleration. The very idea of toleration, is despicable; it supposes that some have a pre-eminence above the rest, to grant indulgence; whereas, all should be equally free, Jews, Turks, Pagans and Christians. Test oaths and established creeds should be avoided as the worst of evils.

— John Leland, Virginia Baptist and advocate for the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; quoted in *Baptist Ways* by Bill Leonard (2003, pp. 130-31).

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Few topics are as important as this course for Christian witness in the 21st Century.
2. This will be a great class if you enjoy learning and are willing to participate.
3. Minor changes may occur to the syllabus between the time it is posted on the Virtual Campus schedule and the start of term. **Please use the syllabus stored in Blackboard, which will be available the first day of the class.**