

# History of World Religions

Mr. John Marsh, Associate Lecturer of History  
Office: Wagoner 150  
Office Hours: Listed below & by appointment  
MWF 11:00-12:40 & 5:00-5:20; Tuesday 10:00-1:00 & 2:00-3:00

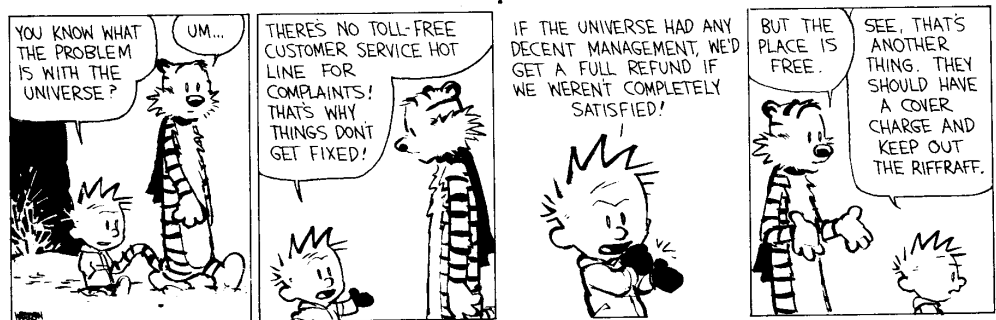
Spring 2025  
E-mail: [jmarsh@bsu.edu](mailto:jmarsh@bsu.edu)

## OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACTING ME

You can stop by my office anytime to see me. You do not need an appointment. My office is in Wagoner in the hall between the nurses' office and the tunnel. I will almost always be there during my office hours listed above, and you may find me there at other times as well. If you can't come during my office hours, we can set an appointment for another time or meet by Zoom. Outside of my office hours, please feel free to email me ([jmarsh@bsu.edu](mailto:jmarsh@bsu.edu)) at any time. Of course, if it is in the evening, you may not get an answer until the next day.

If at any time you have questions, comments, problems, or suggestions please talk to me. If you are

having difficulty in the course, *don't wait*. There are things we can discuss to help you. Most students will find themselves struggling occasionally in some classes, and it's not a weakness to ask for help. On the contrary, it shows wisdom and determination.



You don't need to be having a problem to come see me in my office. I encourage you stop in to simply chat. In fact, if you come sit and talk with me at my office at least once during January & February, I'll give you 1 extra credit point. That's a onetime offer, not a point for every visit.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION FROM ACADEMY CATALOG

This course will explore the development of religions around the world from prehistoric to modern times. The major world religions will be studied, along with religions of the ancient world, non-literate peoples, and small-scale religions. Primary sources will be emphasized to understand the key components of various religions. Special emphasis will also be placed on exploring the interaction between different religions, as well as the relation of religions to the historical time periods through which they develop.

## REQUIRED TEXTS AND READINGS

*The World's Religions*, second edition, Smart  
*Scriptures of the World's Religions*, Sixth edition, Fieser  
*Atlas of the World's Religions*, second edition, Smart

## Abbreviation in schedule

"Text"  
"Scriptures"  
"Atlas"

It is your responsibility to see that you have all 3 required books. There will also be some reading assignments from short articles, documents, etc., which will be made available on Canvas (and/or emailed to you). They are listed on the schedule as "Canvas." Again, it is

your responsibility to make sure you have, or can access, the readings for a class.

Concentration and good notetaking are very important during class time. **Students are expected to read and study the given assignments BEFORE class.** That is essential to their ability to follow the lectures and participate in class discussions. Failure to study the assignments will result in a lower grade in class participation, and of course lower exam scores.

## ASSIGNMENTS

I have listed below the reading assignments for the first month of classes. You must read the assignments prior to class on the designated day. I have also included the tentative dates for exams and projects. **Note:** Sometimes a reading, usually the Atlas, will have “(for reference)” after it in the schedule. That means that it is not required, but is there for your use to provide additional context for the topics. I would recommend that you at least scan the



“Now! *That* should clear up a few things around here!”

headings/maps, images and get a quick idea of the material included.

You are required to bring the scriptures book to class on any day there is an assignment from it (which will be most days). This is very important, as we will be using those readings in class discussion. If you received a reading in electronic form (by e-mail or on Canvas), then you must either bring your computer or print out the reading and bring it.

As the course progresses, it may be necessary to modify some assignments. I will give you notice of a week or more on changes to exams or major assignments. I will generally give you notice of several days or more if I change a reading assignment. However, circumstances occasionally require minor last-minute changes or additions. I will e-mail to you

any such changes no later than 6:00pm on the day before class. **So, you are responsible for checking your e-mail after 6:00pm on the night before class.**

## SCHEDULE

“Canvas” = an electronic reading (Canvas and/or e-mail)

“Text” = *The World's Religions*

“Scriptures” = *Scriptures of the World's Religions* (Often I will give a range of pages and then tell you which ones you can skip from that section, or in some cases, I will list the ones to read from that section.)

“Atlas” = *Atlas of the World's Religions*

Since you may not have your textbooks yet, scans from the books will be posted on Canvas for the first couple weeks.

|   |        | <b>Topics</b>   | <b>Readings</b>   |
|---|--------|---|---|
| M | Jan 6  | Course Intro, Syllabus  | <b>Canvas:</b> Syllabus   |
| W | Jan 8  | What is religion?   | <b>Text or Canvas:</b> pages 10-28 (scan on Canvas)<br><b>DISC QUES</b> List at least 6 questions you think religions try to answer.  |
| F | Jan 10 | Prehistoric religion  | <b>Text or Canvas:</b> pages 32-42<br><b>Canvas:</b> The Birth of Religion<br><b>Atlas:</b> 28-29 (for reference, I don't have a scan)  |
| M | Jan 13 | <b>Prehistoric Religion Quiz</b><br><br>Religion in the World Today | <i>The only assignment is to study for the quiz. The quiz will only take half the period, and so there will be a brief lecture after the quiz</i>   |
| W | Jan 15 | Overview of South Asia  | <b>Canvas:</b> General Ingredients of South Asia Religion<br><b>Text:</b> pages 43-57<br><b>Atlas:</b> 46-49 (for reference)  |
| F | Jan 17 | Indus Valley Civilization<br><br>Early Hinduism (Vedic Brahminism)  | <b>Scripture:</b> pages 1-5, 13-26 (All except for "Burning Dead Bodies" and "The Horse Sacrifice." You may skip those two.)<br><b>Canvas: DISC QUES</b> Discussion Questions for Early Vedas<br><b>Atlas:</b> 46-49 (for reference)  |
| W | Jan 22 | Buddhism  | <b>Text:</b> pages 57-68<br><b>Scripture:</b> pages 97-102, 111-130 (All except for "Dependent Arising," "Selflessness," and "The Cessation of Suffering." You may skip those.)<br><b>Canvas: DISC QUES</b> Discussion Questions for Early Buddhism<br><b>Atlas:</b> 50-51, 66-69 (for reference) |
| F | Jan 24 | Jainism   | <b>Text:</b> 68-72<br><b>Scripture:</b> 75-95<br><b>Canvas: DISC QUES</b> Jainism Discussion Questions  |

|   |        |   |   |
|---|--------|---|---|
| M | Jan 27 | Upanishads and Classical<br>Hinduism                                    | <p><b>Text:</b> 72-75, 87-91</p> <p><b>Scripture:</b> 5-9, The following selections from pages 26-71<br/>Yama's Instructions to Naciketas, Truth and Transcendence, Sacrifices Cannot Lead to the Ultimate Goal, Self-Effort and Liberation, The Meaning of Yoga, The Buddha a False Teacher, Rama a God among Humans, The Bhagavad-Gita, Praise of the Goddess, The Four Stages of Life, Leaving Home Life, Duties of the Four Social Classes, How Women Should Live,</p> <p><b>Atlas:</b> 52-59 (for reference)</p> <p><b>DISC QUES:</b> There are many paths in Hinduism toward advancement in the next life and even liberation from samsara. These readings discuss 3 basic approaches – practice of yoga, following your dharma and duties based on your caste and sex, and worshipping and following the teachings of various gods and goddesses. As you read these selections, note any questions or observations you have. Keep in mind an overall question of what do you think are the advantages and attractions of each of these 3 approaches?</p> |
| W | Jan 29 | Finish discussing Hinduism<br><br>Theravada- Mahayana Buddhism          | <p><b>Canvas:</b> Theravada-Mahayana Chart</p> <p><b>Text:</b> 75-86</p> <p><b>Scripture:</b> The following passages<br/>139-145 On the Differences Between Men &amp; Women and<br/>The Lotus Sutra: Parable of the Burning House<br/>149 The Bodhisattva's Vows of Universal Love<br/>151 Women Should be Honored<br/>152-153 Using Desire to Eradicate Desire</p> <p><b>DISC QUES:</b> What is at the core differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism? What do you think are the implications for a society based on one or the other?</p>   |
| F | Jan 31 | Finish Theravada- Mahayana<br>Buddhism<br><br>Review session for Exam I | <p>No new reading assignment. You can review the study terms, notes and readings from Jan 17-Jan 29 to prep for the review session</p>  |

---

---

W Feb 5                    **EXAM 1**

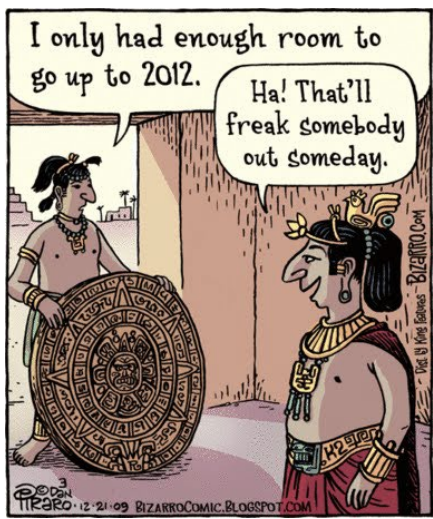
---

F Feb 7                    Discuss Sacred Projects                    Please re-read pages 11-15 in the syllabus about the project

---

**TENTATIVE EXAM & PROJECT DATES**

|             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Feb 5       | Exam 1                         |
| Late Feb    | Exam 2                         |
| Mid-March   | Midterm Exam                   |
| Early April | Exam 3                         |
| Mid-April   | Sacred object/site project due |
| Late April  | Exam 4                         |
| May 6-9     | Final Exam TBA                 |



**CLASS POLICIES**

**ATTENDANCE AND TARDIES:** The policies in the Student Handbook regarding attendance and tardiness will be followed. Students are expected to attend, and be on time, for every class. If you are not in the classroom by the official starting time, you will be marked tardy. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, you will be marked absent, however you will still be able to turn in assignments, per late policy listed below, and participate in the educational activities of the day, so it is definitely in your best interest to attend. You must notify me in advance, using Academy procedures, in the case of pre-arranged absences. Academy policy allows a faculty member to report a student as having an unexcused absence for sleeping in class or for improper use of their computer, tablet or phone during class.

**MAKEUP WORK FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES:** Exams, quizzes, online discussions and other assignments missed must be **made up within 1 week from the date of your return**, unless other arrangements are made with me in advance. Additional time can be granted for extended illnesses or other factors. Do not wait for me to contact you regarding a makeup. **It is your responsibility to contact me to schedule a makeup exam.** Likewise, for homework and class material, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and how to make it up.

**INDIANA ACADEMY UNEXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY**

“It is the policy of the Indiana Academy that any absence from class is unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, and extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the

absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The decision as to whether an absence is excused is not determined by the instructor. Although all absences, both excused and unexcused, are tracked within the Office of Academic Affairs, professors of each class are free to use discretion with a student's first three unexcused absences. Four or more unexcused absences in any particular class a student takes will lead to academic and residential consequences to be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Residential Life that may include detention, residential groundings, parent/principal conference, among others."

**CONSEQUENCES IN THIS CLASS FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:** There is no right to make up quizzes, discussion questions and other similar assignments as a result of an unexcused absence. However, you should still talk with me about how to not fall behind with the course material as a result of the unexcused absence. You will be given an opportunity to take an exam you missed due to an unexcused absence, but there will be a 1-letter-grade penalty on that exam score. That exam must be made up before I hand them back in class (usually about a week). After that, a zero will be entered for the exam score.

Unexcused absences will also negatively impact your Class Participation grade. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences without penalty to your Class Participation grade. 3 points will be deducted from your Class Participation grade for every unexcused absence after that.

Please be aware that Academy policy allows a faculty member to report a student as having an unexcused absence for sleeping in class or improper computer use in class.

#### LATE POLICY

All assignments not turned in at the specified time in class or online are considered late. Late assignments can be turned in up to one week after the due date for a 50% penalty. After one week, late assignments will not be accepted. Extenuating circumstances may be considered, but you must communicate with me in a timely fashion.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Academic dishonesty (cheating) will not be tolerated. Some examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: copying or facilitating copying during exams, turning in written assignments with the same language as others, and copying from internet or print sources without proper citation. **Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to the policies in the Student Handbook.** If you have any questions on what constitutes academic dishonesty, I strongly encourage you to consult the Student Handbook, or discuss it with me. Academic Integrity policies are found here in the online student handbook: <https://academy.bsu.edu/handbook/academic-integrity/>

#### HUMANITIES DIVISION STATEMENT ON AI

"The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course."

## USE OF AI IN THIS COURSE

**You can use AI when you are out of the classroom. You can NOT use AI in the classroom unless I specifically say it is ok for a particular activity.** Remember, I can look at your computer at any time while you are in class. **Use of AI in class, whether for a discussion, quiz or other activity will result in a charge of Academic dishonesty.** Don't even have the program up on your computer!

For example, if we are having a discussion in class where you are asked to analyze something, and you quickly ask an AI program to do that, and then you give that as *your analysis*, you are passing off some computer's thoughts as your own. That is cheating, and it will be enforced using the Academy's policies on academic dishonesty.

I strongly suggest that you do NOT use AI when prepping your answers to the discussion questions. It will significantly reduce the educational benefit to you as the idea is to continue to build your critical thinking skills. AI will be a very useful tool to you throughout your life, but don't let it do your thinking for you. That's a recipe for personal and societal decline. Furthermore, you'll have to explain these topics on the exams, so you'll need to be able to think through them before then anyway. Best to spread out your study of these topics and not try to cram them all in the night before the exam.

**LAPTOPS:** You may use your laptop to take notes. You are required to bring them to class on days when there is a reading assignment that was given out in electronic format (i.e. e-mailed



to you or posted on Canvas). Otherwise, you are not required to bring them to class unless I tell you in advance. **Surfing the web, e-mailing, Instagram or any other activities are strictly forbidden during class. Using your laptop for anything other than educational purposes connected to the class will result in an unexcused absence for that class period, plus 5 points will automatically be subtracted from your participation grade.** A second infraction will result in another unexcused absence, 5 more lost points, and you will be banned from bringing your laptop to class. I reserve the right to check your screen and currently running programs at any time during the class. Use of your laptop in class is a privilege, not a right.

**CLASS ATMOSPHERE:** Feel free to ask questions during the lectures, but always raise your hand and be recognized. Sometimes, if I am in the middle of making a point, I may signal that I have seen you, and will go ahead and complete my point before getting to your question. During class discussions as well, please raise your hand before speaking. Just as in the professional world, an atmosphere of mutual respect and appropriate behavior will be expected at all times. That includes listening to your fellow students as respectfully as you would to me. In addition, **it is important to remember that topics we explore during class discussions will be on the exams as well.** So don't relax your concentration on the

material, or note-taking just because I'm not lecturing.

This class is an academic study of religions, and I will explain in class how that is very different from a devotional study of religion. While we will analyze and discuss them, we are not trying to prove nor disprove any narratives, concepts or beliefs of a religious nature. One's personal religious beliefs or non-beliefs are not relevant to engaging with and understanding the material. We will of course be studying several religions which are practiced today, and occasionally a student volunteers to share something from their personal experience which connects to the topic at hand. That is perfectly acceptable. However, no one in this class will ever be asked what their personal religious views are. Making derogatory comments about particular religions or practitioners, or about another student based on their expressed or assumed religious views, will not be tolerated. Should any such behavior potentially be in violation of Academy policies, such as those regarding bullying, Academy disciplinary procedures will be followed.

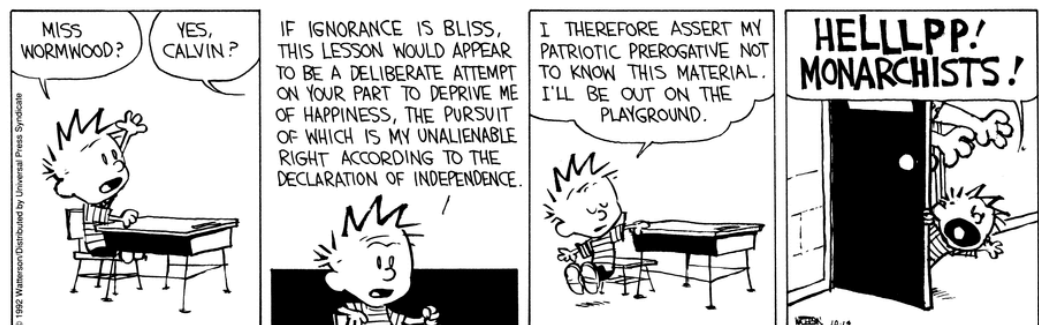
### **HISTORY DEPARTMENT CONTENT WARNING STATEMENT**

"As with many history classes, the lectures, readings, and discussions will include a range of topics that may be triggering, emotionally distressing, and difficult for some students. Engaging with topics such as slavery and human suffering is essential to this discipline. History seeks to understand the experiences and thought processes of former generations, whether for good or ill. Sometimes the language and word choices used by people in the past may be insensitive or politically incorrect today. Nevertheless, the goal of history is to understand the past within its own context and time. If a reading, image shown in class, or discussion is truly troubling to anyone, please do not hesitate to talk to your instructor. In some circumstances, an alternative reading can be assigned."

### **BALL STATE UNIVERSITY DIVERSITY POLICY**

"Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our [Beneficence Pledge](#) and through university resources found [here](#)."

MY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS. I am personally committed to doing everything I can to see that every student has the best possible experience in my course. So if I make a mistake on



a name or a pronoun, please correct me. If there is something that is said in class, by me or another student, which bothers you or gives you concern, please talk to me. In our course, as in society at large, we can best address our problems and concerns with open communication.

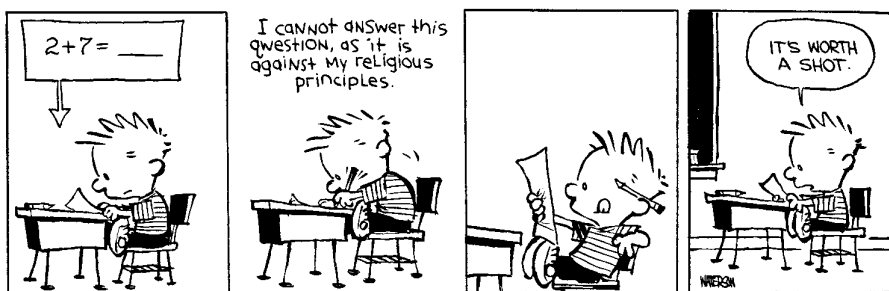


## TAKING NOTES

This course has a certain amount of lecture, and I will do my best to present the information in an organized and interesting manner. Concentration and good notetaking, during lectures as well as discussions, are essential for success in this course. Please talk to me if you are having any trouble taking notes. Here are a few basic tips on notes:

- Read the assigned sections in the text before class. Even if you don't fully grasp it all the first time through, it will provide helpful context for the lecture.
- During lecture, focus on the main points. You can't possibly write down every word I say, but you can write down phrases, names, examples, concepts, and basic elements of a story.
- Be sure to write down any lists, summations, and conclusions I make, as well as anything I repeat.
- If you didn't hear or understand something, you may raise your hand and ask me. Otherwise, skip it and talk to me or a fellow student after class. Do NOT ask your neighbor during lecture as you will miss the current comments and fall farther behind. In addition, it will distract those around you.
- Read your notes as soon as you can after class, and make additions, corrections, or organizational changes while the lecture is still fresh in your mind. Also, if you are unclear on any material, you can ask me about it. This way you will have thorough notes, which you have already reviewed once, when it's time to study for an exam. On the other hand, if you wait until the night before the exam to read your notes, some points will seem unclear, and any gaps will be harder to fill in.
- Review the PowerPoints posted on Canvas and compare them with your notes. However, please note that the PowerPoints are mostly images. They are not a substitute for your notes!
- You may record the lectures if you wish.
- Make sure your note-taking system is organized. If you have to hunt all over your computer to match up notes from 2 successive days of class, then you need a better system.
- Remember, paying close attention and taking good notes during lecture is the first big step in studying for the exams.

## EXAMS & QUIZZES



There will be 4 regular, in-class exams which will be mostly short answer/essay. There will be a late Midterm Exam, comprised entirely of objective questions, which will cover all the material from Exam 1 & 2. Likewise, there will be a Final Exam,

comprised entirely of objective questions, covering the material from Exams 3 and 4 plus some additional concluding material. There will usually be a review session prior to the exams.

I reserve the right to give pop quizzes at any time, for any reason. Obviously, the main purpose of those quizzes will be to assure that you are doing the assigned readings before every class, or are engaged and participating in the class. There will be no make ups for pop quizzes. If you have an excused absence, that quiz will not be used in calculating your grade. If you have an unexcused absence, you will receive a zero for the quiz.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Learning is an active process, and the more you are engaged, the more you will get out of this course. There will be a lot of discussion in this course, and it is essential that students come prepared to participate. **I reserve 100 points during the semester for a participation grade.** The participation grade is based on my assessment of your performance in the following areas:

- Attentiveness during lectures
- Studying assignments prior to class, taking notes on readings, answering discussion questions and bringing the necessary readings to class
- Being ready to answer discussion questions when called on
- Raising your hand to voluntarily get in on the class discussions
- Attitude and effort when participating in simulations, small group discussions, group projects and other activities
- Adherence to the standards of classroom conduct

I know that for some of you, speaking in class is not your favorite thing, and that's okay. However, as a professional, you are going to need to speak in meetings, small groups and even large groups. So you need to continue to enhance those skills and be ready, and this is a good safe place to do that. It is not a contest, and I am not scoring who talks the most in each class period. So I don't want you to feel it is a disaster to your participation grade if you didn't raise your hand in class on a particular day. However, you do have to get your hand up and voluntarily join the conversation at least some of the times. If you never raise your hand in class to get in the discussions, the best you will be able to get on class participation is a C.

Remember, improper use of your laptop during class will cost you 5 points for each infraction. To put that in perspective, losing 5 points is equivalent to dropping an entire letter grade on one of the regular exams. Don't risk it.

I will post 50 points of your participation grade at the end of the third quarter, and the other 50 points at the end of the semester. If you have any questions regarding your standing in that category, at any point during the semester, please talk to me.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Often, I will provide discussion questions on the readings. This is another way to help focus your study of texts and be ready to discuss them in class. Unless I tell you in advance, I will not collect them for points. You can generally just make a bullet list of points and have them in front of you during our discussion. That way you will have had time to prepare your thoughts and observations.

Discussion questions might be listed in the assignment schedule, at the start of a reading (if

it's a doc posted on Canvas), or in a separate document on Canvas. There will not be discussion questions for every reading. I will always put a note with this tag, **DISC QUES**, in the assignment schedule if there are discussion questions for a particular assignment. If you don't see that tag, then there are none for that day.

While I am not collecting these, during the course of our class discussions it will become obvious who has prepared and who has not. I usually do not call on students who do not have their hands up and ask them to answer a new question in class. However, **if it is a discussion question I provided before the class, I will assume everybody is ready to go with an answer. I often will call on students at random for those.** Students who do not read the assignments and do not prepare responses to discussion questions will lose points on their class participation scores, and will have more trouble on exams.

**Please be ready for each class with your thoughts, questions and responses to any discussion questions on the readings. Remember, class participation scores for the semester are worth as much as 2 regular exams.**

## **PROJECTS & PAPERS**

There will be 1 project (sacred object/site) in this course, which is explained in detail at the end of the syllabus.

## **GRADES**

The following is a list of projected exams/assignments which will apply toward the course grade. I reserve the right to modify this list during the course of the semester. Any significant change will be announced in class well in advance.

|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Quiz - prehistoric religion   | 10 points |
| Exam 1                        | 50 points |
| Exam 2                        | 50 points |
| Quarter 3 class participation | 50 points |
| Midterm exam                  | 50 points |
| Exam 3                        | 50 points |
| Sacred object/site project    | 75 points |
| Exam 4                        | 50 points |
| Quarter 4 class participation | 50 points |
| Final Exam                    | 50 points |

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

|             |             |             |             |           |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| A = 92-100% | B+ = 88-89% | B- = 80-81% | C = 72-77%  | D* = <70% |
| A- = 90-91% | B = 82-87%  | C+ = 78-79% | C- = 70-71% |           |

## **SACRED OBJECT/SITE PROJECT**

For this project, you will select and create a replica, model, drawing, or other representation, of an object, structure, complex, natural site, deity, or narrative scene which has significance to one (or possibly more) of the world's religions. Your project can be a three-dimensional item or a flat representation. It does need to represent an actual, not a made up, object,

structure, complex, or natural site.

Examples of objects for your subject include, but are not limited to: carvings, amulets, figurines, ritual equipment, masks, headdresses, scrolls, or relics. You could also make a model of a temple, religious complex, ruins, sacred natural site, statue, shrine, or megaliths. You could do a drawing or other representation of a painting, temple layout, or sacred city. If you want to do some kind of drawing or artwork on the computer, then you are required to discuss that with me first.

If you're making a three-dimensional object, you need to keep it of manageable size— say, no larger than roughly 2' x 2' x 2'. If you feel your object needs to be larger than that, then I want you to talk to me ahead of time and get my approval. If you are making a flat representation, then it can be as large as a poster board size— roughly 2' x 3'.

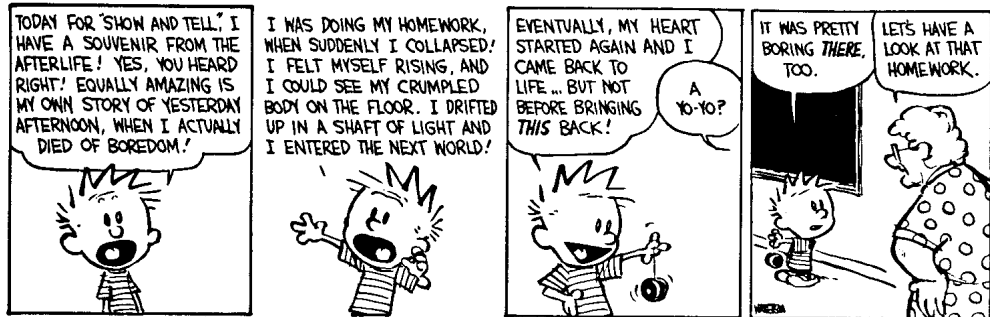
Besides the actual product you create, the other component of this project is a set of accompanying materials. This set must include the following 3 items:

1. A page listing the basic information on your subject (2 copies) *This is going to function as the sign for your project when it is on display, so please keep that in mind as you layout the page*
  - the name or title of the piece *Please make this large - at least 28 pt.*
  - the religion(s) involved
  - the date or time period it was created and used
  - the geographical location(s)
  - the materials used in the actual item
  - the condition or whereabouts today (if known)
  - a photo or photos of the actual item
  - a paragraph or two describing how you created your product
2. **A two-page description of why the item was (is) religiously significant, and how it was (is) used.** (2 copies). In other words, what did (does) it mean to the followers of that faith, what would they do with it (or do there), and what do they think that activity or object will do for them?
3. The grading rubric

**You must turn in 2 copies of the first two items (info page, description).** The reason is that we will put these projects on display for the whole Academy. I will grade one set and return it to you, and the other set (without grading marks) will go on display with the object.

One of the goals of this class is of course to expose you to the rich tapestry of religion in the world. As such, I want you to choose a subject from a religion of which you are not personally a practitioner. However, at no time in this course will I ever ask you about your personal religious views or affiliation, so this requirement will have to be on the honor system. It is obvious though, that if you are, for example, a practicing Roman Catholic, then making a set of rosary beads and describing how they are used and what they mean to a Catholic, would not be particularly educational for you. Also, in keeping with the academic approach of this course, your description of your subject cannot include derogatory or insensitive comments regarding the item or the associated religious faith.

The project is worth 75 points, which is equivalent to one and a half of our regular exams, so it's worth a strong effort on your part. Plus, for clearly exceptional projects, I may award extra



credit. I have included the grading rubric at the end of the syllabus. You should definitely study it to get an idea how the project will be graded. You are required to write your name, and the title of your project on the rubric and turn it in with your project. Also, if time and circumstances permit, we may put the projects on display in one of the lounges for a period of time.

I hope you let your creative juices flow, learn some entirely new information, and have some fun with this project. It is after all a chance to earn some points by doing something other than studying for a test.

#### FAQs

*I'm having trouble thinking of something to do. Do you have any suggestions?*

You have the whole field of world religions, past and present, to choose from. Here are some things you can do to generate ideas:

- Think about what religions, religious ideas, shrines, or ancient ruins intrigue you; or which you know very little about
- Flip through the books for this course
- Keep an eye out during our class sessions and reading assignments for something of interest.
- Surf the Internet
- Take a trip to the BSU Art Museum
- Or, instead of starting with the subject matter, you could start by thinking of what type of product you want to make (drawing, wooden model, etc.), and then let that lead you toward a subject
- You can come talk to me about it

*I'm not much of an artist. Will that hurt my grade?*

Not at all. There are number of projects you can do that don't require specific artistic ability. Furthermore, I am looking to see that you put thought and effort into this project. That clearly shows through in a variety of ways, regardless of artistic ability.

*Can I use a kit?*

Yes. For example, if you get a kit where you make a plaster cast of a statue of an Egyptian God, and then paint it, that would be fine. You can even get free kits. For example, I've seen free patterns online for making a paper folding model of Angkor Wat. A kit would be another

way to make a product that would not necessarily require a great deal of artistic ability. **However**, let me remind you that one of the key things I will be grading on is effort. Some kits would obviously require a certain amount of effort, and others not so much. If all you do is paint eyes on a pre-made statue, or string a few ready-made beads and an amulet on a chain, even though the product might look great, the amount of effort is not going to be too impressive.

**RUBRIC: The rubric is only one page.** However, computer setups and printers vary, so occasionally the lines or spacing get messed up, or the rubric turns into 2 pages. **Please check it before you print it out, and make any necessary adjustments.**

# Sacred Object/Site Project — Grading Rubric

*You must turn in this form with your project  
Circled items on grading indicate a problem*

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Project Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Basics included

Basic information, photograph, rubric 10 points \_\_\_\_\_

## Two-page description

Accurate information

Readability

Grammar and spelling 25 points \_\_\_\_\_

## Product

Complexity, Effort

Appearance

Meets requirements 40 points \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** 75 points \_\_\_\_\_