Andrew O. Fort  **RS 10023**  Office Hours

Office: TBH 313 **UNDERSTANDING RELIGION:** M-F: 11-11:45

Phone: 257-6448 **WORLDVIEWS AND RELIGIONS** or by appt.

a.fort@tcu.edu **Spring 2015** personal.tcu.edu/afort

This course attempts to understand the nature of religion by looking at some foundational ideas, texts, and figures in a variety of religious traditions and worldviews. We will look at differing approaches to the study of religion, and explore what human beings have seen as the ultimate meanings and purposes of existence. Our goal, put most broadly, is to comprehend better the varieties of religious experience and expression in the world. We will primarily use Ninian Smart’s six dimensional model, and end the semester focusing on the worldview and religions found in China, past and present.

Note that we shall assume that religion has many dimensions and that answers to religious questions are manifold and not always within what is usually called “a religion.”

**Note**: this course gives RT and HUM credit in the core curriculum.

**Outcomes:** Through exams, short papers, eCollege/Learning Studio journal entries, and worship site visits, as well as class participation, you will be assessed on your ability:

To show familiarity with, in an introductory way, concepts and ways of understanding in the academic study of religion;

To show knowledge of various religious traditions through the study of some foundational texts, figures, individuals, ideas or practices.

To recognize that all humans, past and present, are part of a specific historical context;

To demonstrate understanding of other worldviews (“mental migration”), to compare and contrast your worldview with those of others, and to identify and articulate the value of doing so.

Some questions which arise from this study are: what is true, and why? Why are people religious? Do people really believe this or that? What do I believe, and why? Learning about others should teach you something about yourself as well.

**Expectations:** Regular attendance is expected (come on time, but come even if late), and roll is taken. If you miss five or more classes, your grade can be lowered automatically unless you have a legitimate and documented excuse. If you have a problem affecting your course participation, or must miss class, let me know. You are also expected to read (and think about) the assignments before class. The readings are the "raw material" with which we shall build our understandings. Bring books to class for reference.

There will be lots of discussion, and questions are welcome. All topics are open, but civil and respectful discourse is required. See other comments on class etiquette below.

**Assessments**: The primary determinant of your grade will be three exams, equal in value (25% each), which include both identification and essay questions. The third exam is during finals. They will cover material from lectures and readings, and are intended to bring out both academic information and personal reflection about what you are learning. Unless you contact me beforehand, only officially excused absences are permitted. *I will distribute exam books on each test date,* and I will keep all exams in my office until the semester ends.

**Other requirements:** you will also do at least one worship site visit off-campus (**due on March 5**). *This exercise will be graded high pass/pass/no credit.* Instructions for the visit are on eCollege/Learning Studio under DocSharing.

You will also *either*

1) write a paper on some aspect of the Chinese worldview/religions which has attracted your interest. You should give both descriptive information on the topic you choose, and some analysis and reflection on why you are interested in it. You must use and reference *at least three* *non-course* resources, one of which must be a book. **Be sure you understand how to include footnotes and bibliography (of any format).**  You will indicate the topic in a paragraph by April 14; it will be due the last day of class, April 30, but can be turned in earlier. *Or* you will

2) do a second worship site visit and write a paper comparing the sites to one another and to your own place of worship, and the insights about them and yourself gained from your visits. Again, indicate the topic in a paragraph by April 14; it will be due April 30, but can be turned in earlier.

In either case, this assignment will be c. 1000 words, or 4 typed, double-spaced pages, and is worth 15% of your semester grade,

Finally, regular responses to readings or personal reflections on religion will also be required, either on eCollege/Learning Studio or in writing; they are mandatory (to stimulate thought), but ungraded. I am looking for a reasoned response to the prompt, and will attend to clear substantiation of your view, and to comments showing awareness of the relevant material, your own worldview and historical context. At semester end, I will look at your class attendance and participation, and at the quantity and quality of the short written responses and the first worship site visit report. They are cumulatively worth 10% of the course grade; this means they can raise *or lower* your grade 10 points. You may ask about your grade at any point, and I will give you a progress report after the second exam.

*To recap: three exams (25% each, so 75%), 1000 word paper (15%), and overall class participation (10****%). Grades: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=below 60. I use +/-, and use the following grade scale: .0-.3=grade minus, .31-.7=grade, .71-.99=grade plus. You may check in with me about your course standing at any time.***

For extra credit, you may go to hear speakers or have other experiences outside of class. *You must write a one page reaction paper to get the credit, due by the last day of class.* Extra credit does not have a specific point value, but can boost your grade up a level (ex: B+ to A-). As a ballpark figure, five extra credit papers are a *minimum* to change a grade.

If you have a problem affecting your course participation, or must miss class, let me know. Also, if you have a disability which may affect your class performance, please inform me during the first week of class. Here are some policy statements:

*Disability Statement approved Fall 2007 by the Undergraduate Council / Revised Summer 2011*: Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities.  Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010.  Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations.  Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator.  Guidelines for documentation may be found at <http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp>.

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

**Academic Misconduct**

Academic Misconduct (Sec. 3.4 from the Student Handbook) –Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the offices of Academic Deans and the Office of Campus Life and are listed in detail in the Undergraduate Catalog (Student Policies>Academic Conduct Policy Details; <http://www.catalog.tcu.edu/current_year/undergraduate/>).

Finally, feel free to see me after class or in my office.

**RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS**

Campus Life (257-7926, Sadler Hall 2006); TCU Library (257-7117); Center for Academic Services (257-7486, Sadler Hall 1022); Writing Center (257-7221, Reed 419); Student Development Services (257-7855, BLUU 2003); Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (257-7830, Jarvis Hall), and Counseling, Testing, and Mental Health Center (257-7863, Brown Lupton Health Center).

**NOTE ON CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

I value a welcoming and comfortable classroom, which leads to an atmosphere conducive to learning. There are various ways both you and I can create an optimal learning environment, where I can teach most effectively and students can best concentrate and participate in class. To facilitate this, I request (and will if necessary assess you on) your being on time (tardiness or leaving class before its conclusion are significant distractions). Two late arrivals=one absence

**You will not need to bring a computer to class.** Note that surfing the web or using the computer for anything other than notetaking is extremely distracting to your classmates, and can make it not worth coming to class. There is good recent research indicating that one cannot truly multitask effectively. **If you use a computer, please stay in the back of the classroom.**

**Please do NOT surf websites or check/send messages on cellphones or computers in class** (phones stay in backpacks, bags, or pockets). Also, please do not

Talk unless related to course material, or speak discourteously

Read material unrelated to this course

Pass notes (middle school was two schools ago)

Eat or sleep (obviously)

**REQUIRED READING:** Our primary texts, available at the bookstore, are Ninian Smart's *Worldviews* and Christian Jochim’s *Chinese Religions: A Cultural Perspective*. Also required is a packet of short readings, which is available at FrogPrints (in the GrandMarc).

**CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (to be completed before class)**

**Also check if an eCollege/Learning Studio entry is due**

Jan. 13 Introduction to course

For next class: First eCollege entry and write your obituary

Jan. 15 Definitions/aims Smart: 1-7

Jan. 17 The Nacirema Reading 1 (short paper due)

Jan. 20 **MLK HOLIDAY**

Jan. 22 Critical thinking and studying religion Readings 2 and 3 (paper due)

Jan. 24 The history of the academic study of religion Smart: 11-15

Jan. 27 Psychological approaches Smart: 65-70 Reading 4

Jan. 29 Sociological approaches Smart: 132-35

Jan. 31 Modern approaches Smart: 8-10, 15-32 Readings 5 and 6

Feb. 3 Worldviews: nationalism Smart: 33-46 Readings 7 and 8 (paper due)

Feb. 5 Worldviews: scientific humanism

Smart: 46-54 Readings 9-11

Feb. 7 Experiential Dimension Smart: 55-64 Readings 12 and 13

Feb. 10 Experience (devotion) Readings 14 and 15

Feb. 12 " " (mysticism) Reading 16

Feb. 14 " " " Reading 17 (paper due)

Feb. 17 **EXAMINATION**

Feb. 19 Mythic Dimension Smart: 71-86 Readings 18-21

Feb. 21 Doctrinal Dimension Smart: 87-95, 98-103 Reading 22

Feb. 24 " " " Smart: 95-97 Reading 23

Feb. 26 Ethical Dimension Smart: 104-11 Readings 24-26

Feb. 28 " " " Smart: 111-17 Readings 27 and 28

**Turn in worship site form with proposed site**

March 3 Ritual Dimension Smart: 118-30 Readings 29 and 30

March 5 Social Dimension Smart: 135-44 Readings 31 and 32

**Worship Site visit due**

March 7 Scientific Humanism: Social Responsibility Readings 33 and 34

**SPRING BREAK**

March 17 Humanistic Psychology Readings 35-37

March 19 Science and Technology Reading 38 and 39

March 21 " " " Reading 40 and 41

March 24 The Future of Religion Smart: 145-58 Reading 42

**Six dimension writing exercise due**

March 26 **EXAMINATION**

March 28 The Chinese Worldview Jochim: 1-10

writing exercise due

March 31 Chinese Religious History Jochim: 12-24, 27-33

April 2 " " " Jochim: 34-55

April 4 Modern China Jochim: 55-60 Reading 43

April 7 Han Confucianism Jochim: 60-68, 77-81, 145-47, 158-60 READING 44

April 9 "Religious" Taoism Jochim: 9, 68-71, 73-76

READING 45

April 11 Chinese Buddhism and Religion and Art in China

Jochim: 10-12, 82-103 (to 109 optional)

April 14 Confucius Jochim: 110-14, 117-27 READING 46

**Paragraph on final paper due**

April 16 Lao-Tzu/Laozi Jochim: 127-34 READING 47

April 18 **GOOD FRIDAY**

April 21 Practical Dimension Jochim: 135-43, 149-56

April 23 Daoism video

April 25 Social Dimension (family) Jochim: 160-73 READINGS 48-50

April 28 " " (monastery) Jochim: 173-81

April 30 Conclusions Jochim: 182-89

**FINAL EXAM**  Wed. May 7 **8:30 am**