

Dear World Religion Student,

I am very excited to welcome you into the Summer, 2024 online World Religions course. I hope that all students who take this class will be introduced to the major religions that one encounters in the world today. As citizens of a global community it is essential for us to appreciate the beliefs of people who live in many different areas of the world. But as [a “melting pot” or some would say a “salad bowl”](#), America has members of all of these religious traditions within its borders. Thus, it is ever more important for us to appreciate these religious traditions.

Because this class has no prerequisites, I do not assume that any student has any knowledge of the religions that we will explore. But realizing that we will be learning the basics of at least 11 belief systems, our work is cut out for us!! We will start with some basic ideas about religion and God and work our way up to some of the more well-established religions. Some people are concerned that the course will be overshadowed by Marist's Catholic heritage. But rest assured that the scrutiny of Christianity will be very similar to the scrutiny of any other of the major religions of the world. Recognizing that this is an 8-week course, we will be rapidly going through the religions. It will be important to stay current with all reading assignments and quizzes as they are assigned. This class, therefore, requires constant participation. But the end result of this class is not just knowledge of other faith traditions. There will be plenty of dialogue which will allow each student to reflect on his/her own faith or personal beliefs.

Each week, the class will introduce the student to one, two or three of the religions found in the world today. While textbook reading is essential to this course, there will be plenty of student to student interaction which will enhance the course material by presenting alternative viewpoints to the material. It is when each student helps his/her classmates to see different perspectives that learning becomes exciting. Due dates will be critical for written assignments and the discussion will depend on timely reading of the course text and lecture notes. The lecture notes will have web links that will have to be explored in order for a well-rounded understanding of the material to be gained.

A major component of this class will be the in-depth exploration of religious thoughts from people that you are familiar with in comparison to a person who is an adherent of a religion that you are not presently familiar with. You will be conducting interviews with these people through the 8-week time frame which will NOT necessitate additional research in a library or online. Because most people shy away from intense religious discussions because of the possibility of argument, this course expects that students will engage family members or acquaintances in dialogue meant to inform not to proselytize. Right away, you should be thinking about the people you would like to interview. The following are the categories of people that you will need to interview:

1. Grandparent---or someone from that age group
2. Parent---or someone from that age group

3. Sibling or friend---someone in your own age group
4. A person who practices a different faith tradition other than your own or your family's professed faith.

To help you to use your time wisely, here are a few recommendations:

1) Obtain the textbook immediately. We will be using

Molloy, Michael. EXPERIENCING THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS: TRADITION CHALLENGE AND CHANGE, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw Hill, 2021.

[ISBN # 9781260813760](#)

Text available at [Marist College Bookstore](#) and/or the [McGraw Hill Website](#)

**NOTE: The publisher has an eBOOK version (CONNECT) which may appeal to some students. Feel free to contain costs by renting this version. To use this version you will need the following course URL.**

<https://connect.mheducation.com/class/j-mcphee-summer202024>

**The use of Amazon.com is highly discouraged since students in past semesters have reported substantial delays in obtaining the book.**

2) Familiarize yourself with BrightSpace, if you have not used it before.

3) Begin reading all materials as soon as they are assigned. Individual Modules will be able to be accessed according to the course calendar. Once a module is opened, it will stay opened but you will not have the ability to work ahead. Since modules will open up sequentially, consistent effort is expected. The calendar will specify which topic we are on and will also have specific dates for assignments that are due. The discussions will assume that you are prepared. We will be moving quickly through the religions and the discussion depends on timely posting. The discussion will be locked as the next discussion opens. This means that only one discussion will go on at a time. There will be no possibility to add posts after the forum has ended.

4) Log in on a daily basis. The introductory discussion will expect a prompt response as soon as the course opens so that all classmates can introduce themselves.

5) The syllabus will be posted online and can also be accessed in the course as soon as it is opened to students. Please take your time to go through the syllabus thoroughly and to understand all course requirements and timing issues. If you have questions before the course opens, e-mail me promptly at [John.McPhee@Marist.edu](mailto:John.McPhee@Marist.edu) You can depend on a prompt response to any question within 24 hours. If a

phone response is needed, please e-mail me with phone number that you can be reached at and I will return your call ASAP.

6) Since the course will take place for only 8 weeks, it is essential that the student be available throughout the term. Please judge time appropriately in terms any planned vacation or holiday activity (4<sup>th</sup> of July). IF there are any reasons that this poses a problem, please do NOT proceed with this class.

The course will be open to you starting on Monday, June 3, 2024. As soon as you gain access, look at Start Here tab where additional information about the course and about procedures will be posted. You can add information to the Introductory Discussion as soon as you gain access. I look forward to working with each of you and I hope that this religious studies course will meet your needs and we will all learn from each other.

Wishing you success,

John M. McPhee