

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT - FALL 2017
GEOG 3911 FA: GEOGRAPHY & RELIGION

Instructor: BRIAN PHILIP DUNN, PhD

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Office Hours: Before and after class or by appointment

Course time and location: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30am-1:00pm, AT-1010

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores how four living religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam – have shaped and are shaped by their physical environments. Following an introduction to the beliefs, rites and global distribution of each, students will gain an understanding of how traditions name, map and construct their world(s) through origin stories, cosmologies and traditional taxonomies of the land and its inhabitants. The meaning and impact of pilgrimage, communal rituals, and festivals are considered in light of current concerns about ecosystem burden and resource management. New possibilities are explored throughout for positive alliance and collaboration in environmental ethics and global concerns.

READINGS: See course schedule below. There is one reading assigned per unit and all are available through LU library online

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Unit 1: Sept 6, 11, 13 - Introduction to Geography and Religion
 - Reading: Chris C. Park, *Sacred Worlds: an introduction to geography and religion* (New York: Routledge, 1994), Chapter 1: "Geography and Religion", 1-30.
- Unit 2: Sept 18, 20, 25, 27 – Hinduism
 - Reading: Wilbert M. Gesler and Margaret Pierce, "Hindu Varanasi," *The Geographical Review* 90 (2): 222-237, April 2000.
 - **Oct 2 – Assignment 1 Due**
- Unit 3: Oct 2, 4, 9, (Oct 11-13 is reading week) 16, 18 – Buddhism
 - Reading: Dan Smyer Yü, "Sentience of the Earth: Eco-Buddhist Mandalizing of Dwelling Place in Amdo, Tibet," *JSRNC* (8.4): 483-501, 2014.
 - **Oct 18 - Midterm (posted and submitted on D2L)**
- Unit 4: Oct 23, 25, 30, Nov 1 – Christianity
 - Reading: Jason M. Brown, "Thomas Merton, Wilderness and the Sacramental Power of Place," *Merton Annual* Vol. 29: 80-89, 2016.
- Unit 5: Nov 6, 8, 13, 15 – Islam
 - Reading: Daniel Z. Levin, "Which Way is Jerusalem? Which Way is Mecca?: The Direction-Facing Problem in Religion and Geography," *Journal of Geography* 101: 27-37, 2002.
 - **Nov 15 – Assignment 2 Due**
- Unit 6: Nov 20, 22, 27, 29 – Ancient and Modern Intersections
 - Reading: Lily Kong, "Mapping 'New' Geographies of Religion: Politics and Poetics in Modernity," *Progress in Human Geography* 25.2: 211-233, 2001.
- Dec 4 – Review • **Dec 7-17 – Final Exam TBD**

Any changes to the above schedule will be announced in class with a reminder sent out to all by email

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS: Power points for lectures will be made available on D2L. Assessment will include material covered in class so it is important that you make priority of attending and taking your own notes.

EXAMS: The midterm will be mostly short answer questions and will cover any lecture and reading material to date. The final exam will be roughly the same format for lecture and reading material since the midterm plus one essay question testing overall understanding and ability to critically engage with the course material. I hate writing multiple-choice questions so don't expect any.

EVALUATION:

- Assignment 1 20%
- Midterm 25%
- Assignment 2 20%
- Final Exam 35%

GRADING SCHEME:

- A+ 90 to 100%
- A 80 to 89%
- B 70 to 79%
- C 60 to 69%
- D 50 to 59%
- E 40 to 49%
- F 1 to 39%

EXPECTATIONS:

- Regular attendance, of course. Readings are only supplemental to the course material covered in the bi-weekly lectures, so it's really important that you prioritize coming to all the lectures. They'll be so interesting you won't want to miss them anyway.
- Submission of assignments is expected by class time on the date that they are due.
- Late submissions of assignments (except in the case of medical or compassionate grounds arranged with me before the due date) will lose 10% per day.
- The midterm and the final exam must be written on dates scheduled. Make-up exams will only be arranged with a doctor's note and will have to be cleared with a Student Health Certificate: <http://registrar.lakeheadu.ca/uploads/docs/F.HealthCertificate.pdf>
- No one will be allowed to write the final exam before the scheduled date, and no one will get special dispensations for travel plans. So it's best not to book your tickets home before the exam dates are posted.
- Accommodations can be made for students with special needs, but will require medical documentation and arrangement through the Student Accessibility Services (SAS). See: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>
- Academic integrity is expected. The University does not take plagiarism or any other forms of academic dishonesty lightly. For guidelines on that and to get better acquainted with the procedures in place in the case of academic dishonesty please see the "Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures" at: <http://policies.lakeheadu.ca/policy.php?pid=60>
- For the rest of the University's regulations please see: <http://calendar.lakeheadu.ca/current/contents/regulations/univregsintro.html>