

RE 103: RELIGION AND CULTURE
The Experience of Self & Community, Power & Empowerment
Spring 2010

Instructor: Dr. Mary Zeiss Stange

Ladd 213

Office Hours: Wed 2:00-4:00, Fri. 9:00-Noon, and by appt.

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The basic goals of this course are two:

To foster appreciation of the many ways in which people are religious, and how the religious self-understanding affects people's self-perceptions, and their experience of and activity in the world. Special attention is devoted to the precise ways in which issues of class, race and gender impact individuals' self-understanding in different social and cultural settings.

To develop objective critical skills for studying religious phenomena in various philosophical, historical and cultural contexts. This applies to other traditions as well as to one's own. Particular emphasis is placed on the idea of learning to appreciate how different ideas about self and world may be real and valid for someone else, and can be respected as such, without threatening or challenging one's personal religious perspective.

Texts:

John Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*

Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

Mohandas Gandhi, *Autobiography*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*

Judith Plaskow and Carol Christ, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*

David Chidester, several chapters from *Patterns of Power* (to be handed out in class)

Additional materials provided in class

Audio-visual presentations in class (days noted on syllabus; absolutely no "reruns")

A good dictionary

Any standard edition (translation, not paraphrase) of the Bible

Format:

Classes are a mixture of lecture and discussion; regular attendance and active participation are vital to success in this course.

Attendance Policy:

Because regular attendance and active participation are vital to success in this course, no more than three unexcused absences will be tolerated. Exceeding this limit will result in an automatic lowering of your semester grade, 3 percentage points for each additional class missed.

Etiquette:

Plan to arrive in class on time.

Feel free to bring a beverage and/or light snack, but not a meal.

Be sure your cell phone is turned off, and stowed out of sight, before class begins.

Use of a laptop during class is prohibited, unless you can document a medical reason.

Use of any and all other electronic devices during class is strictly prohibited.

We will take a five-minute break approximately halfway through class each day. This is the *only* time you should leave the room during the class period.

Evaluation:

Grading is based upon the following criteria:

2 short response papers.....	20%
3 examinations.....	45%
Religious visitation assignment.....	25%
Participation.....	10%
	100%

The *response papers* are 3-page responses to selected films; each counts for 10% of the semester grade, and you will have your choice among four options to write. (You may opt to write a third paper, and drop the lowest of the three grades.) Regardless of which videos you choose to write your essays on, for the purposes of exams you are responsible for the content of all of them.

The *exams* combine objective (multiple choice, matching, etc.) and essay questions. They are not cumulative tests, and each accounts for 15% of the semester grade.

The *religious visitation* is an independent project undertaken outside of class time, involving attendance at a local religious institution and writing a report of your experience, structured according to specific guidelines.

Participation means not only coming to class consistently, and being consistently prepared, it also means active, engaged listening, asking thoughtful, constructive questions about the course materials, and contributing to and advancing class discussion.

Syllabus:

All reading must be completed prior to the class period for which it is assigned; comprehension of lectures and media presentations, and effective participation in discussions, will depend upon thorough preparation. Handouts for use in class will be available ahead of time, to afford ample time for preparation.

Note that the dates for exams and when written assignments are due are starred.

- Jan 26: Introduction: What is Religion? Film: "Our Sacred Land"
 28: *Black Elk Speaks*, Foreword, Prefaces, Chapters 1-7; Film: "Spirit of Crazy Horse;" **Writing assignment #1.**
- Feb 02: *BES*, Chapters 8-19
 04: N. Scott Momaday, "The Native Way of Seeing" [Handout].
- *09: *BES*, Chapters 20-26 & Appendices; **Writing assignment #1 due**
 11: *Patterns of Power*, Chapters 4 ("Native Americans") & 5 ("Black Americans") [Handouts].
- 16: *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Chapters 1-3. Film: "Eyes on the Prize"
 18: Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter From the Birmingham Jail" [Handout];
Autobiography of Malcolm X, Chapters 4-12.
- 23: *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Chapters 13-19.
 *25: **Exam**
- Mar 02: Indian religions: Gandhi, *Autobiography*, Part I; Film: "330 Million Gods"
Writing Assignment #2.
 04: Gandhi's *Autobiography*, Parts II & III; the story of Gautama Buddha
- 09: Film: "Footprint of the Buddha" **Writing Assignment #3**
 *11: Gandhi's *Autobiography*, Parts IV & V; Joseph Campbell, "Prologue: The Monomyth" **Writing Assignment #2 due.**
- 16: **Spring Break**
 18: " "
- 23: *Woman Warrior*, "No Name Woman;" *Womanspirit Rising*, 228-245 (Christ);
 Film: "Small Happiness"
- *25: *Woman Warrior*, "White Tigers" and "Shaman"; Film: "Taoism: A Question of Balance" **Writing Assignment #3 due.**
- 30: *Woman Warrior*, "At the Western Palace" and "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe;" *Patterns of Power*, Chapter 6 ("Immigrant Americans") [Handout].
- Apr 01: *Patterns of Power*, Chapter 3 ("Civil Religion") [Handout].
- 06: Film: "Protestant Spirit U.S.A." Religious Visitation assignment and discussion.
 *08: **Exam.**

Apr 13: WR 107-119 (Pagels); 198-209 (Plaskow); 273-287 (Christ). Film: "Goddess Remembered." The truth about the Easter Bunny. **Writing Assignment #4.**
 15: WR 74-83 (Trible); 84-92 (Schussler Fiorenza); 93-106 (McLaughlin), 210-216 (Daly). A-V on Sonia Johnson and Sr. Maureen Fiedler

20: Film: "The Burning Times." *Womanspirit Rising*, 259-272 (Starhawk), 273-286 (Christ), 120-139 (Stone)

22: WR 167-173 (Gross); 174-178 (Janowicz and Wenig); 179-184 (Plaskow).
Writing Assignment #4 due.

27: Review session.

*29: **Religious Visitation due in PH & RE Office by 4:30 p.m..** [*absolute deadline: no extensions, no excuses*].

May *04: **Exam.**

There is no final exam in this course. Final exams are against the professor's religion.