Global Religions in Context (IS XXX)

Dr. Charles Farhadian  
Department of Religious Studies  
Westmont Global Semester  
Credit Hours: 4  
Fall of 2025

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Department Phone: 805.565.7094  
Office Location: Porter Center 10  
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of global religions, including histories, texts, and philosophies from countries around the world, this course examines the expression and experience of various major religions in their local and global contexts. Focus will be on South Asian Religions, Mediterranean and West Asian Religions (EMWAR), Islamic Studies, and Christianity, focusing on the religious practices and formations that span the globe. Keeping an eye on origins as well as configurations of global religions, the course will consider competing and complementary value systems and worldviews that circulate worldwide through channels of religious faith and practice. The course approaches religious traditions empathetically while upholding Christian uniqueness. Since this is a travel course, students will be exposed to readings, discussions, and interactions as observers and sometimes participants of global religions. This is a General Education course that satisfies the “Thinking Globally” component of the curriculum. There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, students should expect to be able to:

1. Describe the similarities and differences between the global religions.

2. Analyze the contributions of religions to society, culture, and to personal and communal betterment. Analyze drawbacks to how religions might curtail these domains.

3. Analyze Christian uniqueness in the context of global religions.
BOOKS

All or selections of the following books are required E-Texts (must be purchased for a Kindle-compatible device), or selections will be digitized for students.

In addition to the books listed below, handouts will be provided on Canvas.

General books to provide brief overviews and global extension of religions:


China


Vietnam


India


*Living Water and Indian Bowl*, Dayananda Bharati (William Carey Publishing)
Saudi Arabia


Israel/Jordan

Munther Isaac, The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope (IVP, 2020).

Greece
Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity (Penguin, 2015).

Turkey (short visit)
A. Özdemir, Visible Islam in Modern Turkey (Palgrave, 2000).


RECOMMENDED TEXTS


Nabeel Qureshi, Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity (Zondervan, 2018)

Nabeel Qureshi, No God But One: Allah or Jesus? (Zondervan, 2016)


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Attendance and Participation (10%).** Attendance is mandatory and subject to the policies of Westmont College. Failure to appear for any examination will result in an “F” for that examination. Attendance involves not only physical presence, but also active participation in class, discussions, and fieldtrips. Students will be lead in-class discussions and provide handouts.

   Handouts should be formatted as follows: a) write name of article and author on top of page, along with name of presenter; b) provide a 1–2-page summary of the article; you may use narrative, bullet points, or a combination. Be sure to highlight quotations that are important; c) provide 2–3 questions at the bottom of the page for possible class discussion; d) make enough copies for our entire class for your day’s discussion. These handouts will serve as a review packet for the examinations.

2. **One Paper (15%).** The paper will be graded on the basis of content, grammar, style, and presentation (see Grading Information and Instructions for Paper Formatting sections below). Rules regarding plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Papers should be 1500 words in length. Please italicize all book titles (except for names of sacred texts) and foreign words. Note: as a reminder, backup all your work, especially your papers, as extensions will not be given due to computer problems.
3. Case study presentation (15%). Students will work in pairs to present a case study to the class once toward the end of the semester. The case study will compare and contrast religions and cultures in at least two locations in which we have ventured. Further details on this assignment will be provided in class.

3. Two Examinations (30%). Each examination counts for 15% toward your course grade.

4. Final Examination (30%).

GRADING SCALE

The final grade for all assignments, exams, discussions, educational experiences, and attendance and participation, will be determined by the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-95: A</td>
<td>89-86: B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-80: B-</td>
<td>79-84: C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-70: C-</td>
<td>69-74: D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-60: D-</td>
<td>Below 60: F</td>
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GRADING INFORMATION

Grading criteria include correctness, completeness, precision, depth, grammar, presentation, and coherence of your answer. The importance of the argument is also important in evaluating papers. The following is a brief explanation of how I distinguish among grades.

100-90%: Superior work that involves something more than mere competence. This work entails depth of analysis, imaginative insight, careful synthesis of the material, and an attention to detail that hints at a nuanced and subtle analysis. This level work requires superb grammar, presentation, and content. This level of work is distinguished from lower levels by its qualitative difference.

89-80%: Good work that is solid, on target, and competent. It does not mislead. This level work states the important points and explains them adequately and competently. Work at this level attends carefully to the assignment, fulfilling each component of it. In examinations this requires answering the question in full. In papers it means exploring a carefully delineated topic or text as carefully and as fully as space allows.

79-70%: Acceptable but flawed work. This work may be flawed in different respects: missing the target, not quite seeing the point, misunderstanding what the question asks for, struggling for clarity. The work still demonstrates a grappling with the material and ideas in a plausible manner. In examinations, such work may make ambiguous points or use imprecise terms and concepts. Such work typically does not construct arguments well or misses some crucial points implied in the question. This level of work still evidences a general sense of the issues and a capacity to think about them. This level essay frequently is quite short in length.
69-60%: Unacceptable but passing work. This work usually demonstrates only a rudimentary awareness of the issues or problems, but even this is often confused by acute writing difficulties or an inattentiveness to the question. This level essay is typically quite short.

59-50%: Unacceptable and unpassable work.

**INSTRUCTION FOR PAPER FORMATTING**

1. In the upper left-hand corner type your name, the date, the course number, and the number of words in the paper. Never use a cover sheet.
2. Two lines down, centered, type the title of your paper; use Times New Roman 12-point font.
3. Follow MLA formatting.
4. Set your line spacing to double.
5. Use one-inch margins on all sides.
6. Do not use contractions (unless in original quotation). (Don’t)
7. Place page numbers in the lower center of all pages, except the first.
8. Italicize book titles and non-English words (no need to underline)
9. Write the paper as though the reader knows nothing of the material. You will need to define terms.
10. Email the paper directly to me in either WORD or PAGES format (not PDF).

**OTHER**

1. Westmont College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students who have been diagnosed with a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Office of Disability Services. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your equal access to this course. Please contact Seth Miller, Director of Disability Services (310A Voskuyl Library, 565-6286) or visit the website for more information: [http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability](http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability).

2. Writers’ Corner at Westmont, the campus writing center, is an academic support service free for all students. Peer tutors are available to help you with invention (getting started), arrangement (getting organized), style, genres of writing, thesis statements, paragraph development and structure, integrating sources, and common citation styles. One-on-one tutorials are held in Voskuyl Library (VL 215). Open hours are typically from 4-11 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and from 6-11 p.m. on Sunday. Drop-ins are welcome, though keep in mind that the writing center will be busier during peak times of the semester (before mid-term and each holiday break) as well as later in the evening (9-11 p.m.). For more information, visit the writing center website: [http://www.westmont.edu/academics/departments/english/writers-corner.html](http://www.westmont.edu/academics/departments/english/writers-corner.html). Please keep the international time zone differences in mind as you engage their office.
3. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Failure to appear for an examination will result in an “F” for that examination.

4. Lectures may not be recorded, unless with the permission of the professor.

5. Please check Canvas for handouts.

6. Please do not use computers or cell phones in class. If you need to use your cell phone, please leave the classroom or wait until break. Be fully human.

7. Please contact the professor if you have any questions or concerns: farhadian@westmont.edu.

8. Be happy in class. (Countless people around the world would give up everything to be sitting in your seat to learn. You will see many of these eager students in our travels.)
# Reading Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Religion in China: Survival and Revival Under Communist Rule:</em></td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Constructing China’s Jerusalem:</em> “Putting Christianity and Capitalism in Their Place”; “The Rise of ‘Boss Christians’ and Their Engagement with State Power”; “Conversion to Urban Citizenship: Rural Migrant Workers’ Participation in Wenzhou Christianity”</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1. <em>Vietnam’s Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity</em></td>
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<td>2. <em>When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman’s Journey from War to Peace</em></td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>India</th>
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<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Living Water and Indian Bowl,</em> Dayananda Bharati (William Carey Publishing)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jerusalem University College curriculum:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course, “Special Course: Jesus and Contemporary Religions”</td>
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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>Reading Schedule:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jerusalem University College curriculum:</td>
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| Week 11 | Israel | Jerusalem University College curriculum:  
|         |       | JUC extension to Jordan  |
| Week 12 | Greece | *The Orthodox Church*: “Holy Tradition: The Source of the Orthodox Faith”; “God and Humankind”  |
| Week 13 | Greece | *The Orthodox Church*: “The Church of God”; “Orthodox Worship I-III”  |
| Week 14 |        | Selections from Frederick Buechner, Henri Nouwen, and others  |

Commented [CF11]: Explores similarities and differences between Western and Eastern forms of Christianity, particularly in relationship to community identity and history.

Commented [CF12]: Students learn about trans-regional connections by discussion of similarities and differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western forms of Christianity, as well as the connections between sites of investigation and biblical writers.

Commented [CF13]: Focused time of processing personal, intellectual, and spiritual development through the semester, making explicit connections between student growth and the reflexivity experienced and learned throughout the course. Attention will be paid to comparative experiences and learning between different countries. *Explore the Christian (ethical) responses to our semester* together in light of what we have learned about global religions in various contexts; e.g., How will students live differently as Christians given what they have learned? How will they treat others, the natural world, and themselves differently? How will they respond using their God-given gifts and talents?