

“The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.”

Course	WORLD RELIGIONS MISS 0784 / THEO 0737
Date and Time	JANUARY 11 – APRIL 12, 2021 WEB-BASED ONLINE
Instructor	Brett Potter, PhD bpotter@tyndale.ca
Class Information	<p>This course is designed to be asynchronous. Lectures are posted online so students can learn based on their own schedule; the same flexibility is built into the weekly forum discussions. The professor plays an active role in moderating discussion, guiding research, and introducing topics and resources.</p> <p>Students may choose to participate in live-streamed office hours as posted below.</p> <p>Office Hours (virtual): Wednesdays 11:00-12:00 or at a separate time by appointment.</p>
Course Material	<p>Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca</p> <p>Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only. Learn how to access and forward emails to your personal account.</p>

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Begins with an introduction to different responses to world religions. We will then examine crucial guidelines in the study of other religions. After these methodological issues are addressed, attention will be directed to assessment of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, western esotericism and other religious traditions.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the major beliefs and features of a range of religious traditions, including important terminology, texts, history, practices, and major figures;
2. Interpret the aesthetic and sensory aspects of religion;
3. Practice competency in interfaith dialogue with the goal of constructive peacemaking;
4. Analyze world religions from an informed and reflective perspective.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

Partridge, Christopher and Tim Dowley, eds. [*Introduction to World Religions, Third Edition*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018.

Plate, S. Brent. *A History of Religion in 5 1/2 Objects: Bringing religion to its senses*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014.

Primary readings from each of the major world religions studied (such as the Qur'an, Bhagavad Gita, etc.) will be provided on the course website as PDFs.

B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

Wright, Beth, ed. [*A Study Companion to Introduction to World Religions*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013. [Currently only available for the Second Edition but still a good resource.]

Tyndale recommends www.stepbible.org – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Attendance in this course is demonstrated by regular log-ins and up-to-date participation in forums.

1. **Weekly Online Reflection and Responses:** 35% of final grade

Students will be put into online “groups” who will interact with each other over the course of the semester. The purpose of this engagement is to foster analytical skills as well as to help with the interdisciplinary application of course material.

Reflection

Each week, one group member (on a rotating basis) will write a short reflection of approximately 300 words on the readings for the week, answering these questions:

- What, to an adherent of this religious tradition, are some of the most important *values* or *practices*? Think especially of how these religions are practiced in our pluralistic Canadian context. (For example: Jainism stresses *ahimsa* or non-harm to all creatures; how might this belief shape someone’s worldview?)
- What historical context should we keep in mind in thinking about this particular tradition? (For example: Contemporary Sikhs still remember the political events of 1984; modern Judaism has to be understood in reference to the Shoah.)
- What can we learn from this religious tradition?
- If relevant: What questions do we still have?

This part of the assignment is due on the Tuesday of the week it is due. During the semester, each individual will write two such reflections.

Responses (discussion)

The rest of the participants in the group will then post responses to the reflection, identifying interesting concepts, sharing their own thoughts, concerns, and experiences, and posing new questions when appropriate. Links and videos are welcomed!

To foster a more organic discussion and demonstrate participation, participants will post twice during the week: once shortly after the reflection is posted on Wednesday, and once closer to the end of the week (e.g. Saturday) to follow up on the discussion. Individual posts do not have a minimum length, but your responses should be long enough to coherently respond to the reflection.

[Note: Grading will be based on demonstrating engagement with each other and with the text. For some students, this may mean two solid posts; other students may choose to post more frequently. With an eye to “quality over quantity,” it is important to remember that 1) two posts is all that is required but 2) you should aim for more than “Thanks _____ for your post, I agree with you.”]

The group member who wrote the weekly reflection only needs to post one response (near the end of the week) on the week they are responsible for leading.

***The schedule of individual and group summaries will begin in week 3 and conclude in week 12, so there will be 10 weeks of discussions in total.

FORUM DISCUSSION GRADING RUBRIC

	A	B	C	D
Completeness of post	Addresses all parts of question; meets and did not exceed limit; comprehensive response	Addresses all parts of question; respectable length & did not exceed limit; somewhat comprehensive	Addresses some parts of question; shorter length; incomplete post	Rarely addresses question; far too short or far too long; incomplete post
Clarity of post	Clear and concise posts; grammatically correct with rare misspellings	Clear, but can be more concise; a few grammatical or spelling errors	Somewhat clear, but with significant number of errors in spelling and grammar	Unclear, poor spelling and grammar in most posts
Critical engagement with class material (lectures, readings)	Thoughtful; opinions and ideas are substantiated with class material and additional resources; active reflection & questioning	Thoughtful; opinions and ideas are occasionally substantiated with class material; some reflection & questioning	Less thoughtful; opinions and ideas are sometimes substantiated with class material; insufficient reflection & questioning	Opinions and ideas are not substantiated with class material; no reflection & questioning
Promptness & quality of responses	Posting on time; responds to all group members' postings in timely manner; thoughtful responses	Posting on time; responds to most postings in timely manner; somewhat thoughtful responses	Posting mostly on time; responds to postings 2-3 days after initial discussion; less thoughtful responses	Late posting; rarely responds to group members' postings; responses not thoughtful

2. “Sensing Religion” Assignment: 25% of final grade

In this assignment, you will find and write about an **image** or **object** embedded within a particular religious tradition. Examples might include Tibetan “prayer wheels”; a Sikh *kangha*; Hindu images of Vishnu or Ganesh; a particularly fragrant incense; a kind of food used for a particular ritual. Taking the lead from S. Brent Plate’s book, discuss the ways this aesthetic, sensory object “means” something to religious individuals.

You can begin by **describing** the object or image closely – what does it look like? Where would it be placed or used? How do the faithful relate to it?

From there, move to **analysis** – how does it reveal something about the “feel” of a particular religious tradition? Why would someone treasure this object or see it as foundational to their identity?

Finally, **reflect** on how you relate to this object and how it resonates (or is very alien to!) your own life and experience of faith.

Creativity is encouraged!

Length: 5-6 pages + images

Due Date: Week 6 (Saturday, Feb. 27 at 11:59 pm – submit via course website)

3. Research Essay: 40% of final grade

This assignment is designed to give you the opportunity to explore one of the religious traditions dealt with in class in more detail. You will research a topic related to a major world religious tradition and develop a cogent thesis based on the findings of your research.

The essay should not just provide an overview of a particular religion, nor should it simply be an argument for “why this religion is wrong” from a Christian perspective. Instead, you may want to explore a topic related to a particular religious tradition such as the role of women; eschatology; attitudes towards the afterlife and funeral practices; how sacred texts are read; religion and food; prayer and mysticism; non-violence and ethics; festivals, pilgrimages, and rituals; diaspora and secularization; and so on!

All topics must be approved by the professor, who is also available to assist you in finding a topic appropriate in scope and content. Interdisciplinary approaches are welcome.

Though you may use some of the readings used in class as research material, you must also find six (6) additional scholarly resources – both academic books and journal articles. Please remember that the best place to do research as a Tyndale student is the Tyndale library, both in terms of books and online resources. The essay should be written in accordance with academic

standards including the use of proper footnotes in MLA style.

The paper should be approximately 12-14 double-spaced pages in length.

You may hand in an electronic copy of the paper via email.

Due Date: Week 12 (Saturday, April 10 at 11:59 pm – submit via course website)

D. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Weekly Online Reflection and Response	35 %
“Sensing Religion” Assignment	25 %
Research Essay	40 %
Total Grade	100 %

F. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Your work should demonstrate the following characteristics:

Citation of Sources

For proper citation style, consult the [Chicago-Style Quick Guide](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially [ch. 14](#). For citing scripture texts, refer to sections [10.44 to 10.48](#) and [14.238 to 14.241](#).

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism. Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#). Citation and other [tip sheets](#).

Students should also consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

Research Ethics

All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the [Tyndale Research Ethics Board \(REB\)](#). Check with the Seminary Dean's Office (aa@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

G. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Week 1 – Jan. 11-16

What is "Religion"?

Partridge/Dowley: Part 1 (pp. 2-41)

Week 2 – Jan. 18-23

Indigenous Religions

Partridge/Dowley: Part 3 (pp. 130-177)

Plate, "Stones," pp. 23-60

Online: Anishnaabe Creation Story; NFB video on Cree ritual
Tanya Talaga, “All Our Relations” (excerpt)

Week 3 – Jan. 25-30

Hinduism

Partridge/Dowley: Part 4 (pp. 178-217)

Online: *The Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* (excerpts); NFB video on the architecture of the Mandir

Week 4 – Feb. 1-6

Buddhism

Partridge/Dowley: Part 5 (pp. 218-255)

Online: *Dhammapada* and *Heart Sutra* (excerpt); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (excerpt)

Plate, “Incense,” pp. 61-98

Week 5 – Feb. 8-13

Jainism and Sikhism

Partridge/Dowley: Part 6 (pp. 256-289) and Part 12 (pp. 484-515)

Online: *Japji Sahib* (excerpt); article by Simran Jeet Singh

READING WEEK – Feb. 15-20

Week 6 – Feb. 22-27

Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Religions

Partridge/Dowley: Part 7 (pp. 290-309) and Part 8 (pp. 310-329)

Plate, “Drums,” pp. 99-136

Online: Daodejing, Book I (excerpt)

“Sensing Religion” Assignment Due (Sat. Feb. 27 at 11:59 pm)

Week 7 – Mar. 1-6

Zoroastrianism and the Rise of Monotheism

Partridge/Dowley: Part 2 (pp. 63-114) [optional reading pp. 42-129]

Plate, "Crosses," pp. 137-174

Online: *Avesta* (excerpt); Khojeste Mistree, "The Zoroastrian Flame"

Week 8 – Mar. 8-13

Judaism

Partridge/Dowley: Part 9 (pp. 330-385)

Plate, "Bread," pp. 175-214

Online: "What is the Talmud?" and "The Sabbath in the Talmud"

Mishnah – "Berakhot" (from Seder Zeraim) and "Pirkei Avot" (from Seder Nezikin)

Week 9 – Mar. 15-20

Christianity Among World Religions

Partridge/Dowley: Part 10 (pp. 386-435)

Online: Clark Pinnock, "Towards an Evangelical Theology of Religions"; Nostra Aetate

Week 10 – Mar. 22-27

Islam

Partridge/Dowley: Part 11 (pp. 436-483)

Online: *The Qur'an* (excerpts from surahs 2, 17, 23, 24, 67)

Gabriel Said Reynolds, "Reading the Qur'an Through the Bible"

Week 11 – Mar. 29-Apr. 3

Baha'i, Mormonism, and NRMs

Partridge/Dowley: pp. 522-527 (NRMs) and pp. 528-531 (Baha'i)

Plate, "Soul," pp. 215-224

Online: *The Book of Mormon* (excerpt); "Why the 'Mormon' Church Changed its Name"

Week 12 – Apr. 5-10

Ways Forward: Secularization, Disenchantment, and the Global Village

Partridge/Dowley: Part 13 (pp. 516-556)

Online: Interview with Charles Taylor

Final Essay Due (Saturday, April 10 at 11:59 pm)

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

([Tyndale Library](#) supports this course with [e-journals](#), [e-books](#), and the [mail delivery of books](#) and circulating materials. See the [Library FAQ page](#).)

See also this Library Guide:

<https://www.tyndale.ca/library/eresources/world-religions-online>

The following bibliography contains many good titles from a range of world religions. However, this is by no means an exhaustive list!

Ahmed, Akbar. *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*. New York: Routledge, revised ed., 2002.

Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. New York: Modern Library, revised ed., 2002.

Awde, Nicholas, trans. and ed. *Women in Islam: An Anthology from the Qur'an and Hadiths*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

Boyce, Mary. *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, Second Edition. London: Routledge, 1979/2001.

Doniger, Wendy. *The Hindus: An Alternative History*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.

Doniger, Wendy. *On Hinduism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Dundas, Paul. *The Jains*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Eck, Diana L. *India: A Sacred Geography*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Girardot, N. J., James Miller and Liu Xiaogan, eds. *Daoism and Ecology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions / Harvard University Press, 2001.

- Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.
- Hawley, John Stratton and Gurinder Singh Mann. *Studying the Sikhs: Issues for North America*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*. New York: Farrer, Strauss, and Giroux, 1976.
- Hinnells, John. *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Jain, Pankaj. *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*. Fernham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011.
- Kaur Singh, Nikky Gunninder. *The Feminine Principle in the Sikh Vision of the Transcendent*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Kharak Singh, G.S. Mansukhani, and Jasbir Singh Mann, eds. *Fundamental Issues in Sikh Studies*. Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 1992.
- Kohn, Livia, ed. *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage and Ritual*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.
- Loya, Joseph A., Wan-li Ho, and Chang-shin Jih. *The Tao of Jesus: An Experiment in Inter-Traditional Understanding*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Mann, Jasbir Singh and Harbans Singh Saraon, eds. *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*. Irvine, CA: Sikh Community of North America, 1989.
- McCutcheon, Russell. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*. New York: Continuum, 1995.
- McLeod, H.W., trans. *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*. Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Mehr, Farhang. *The Zoroastrian Tradition: An Introduction to the Ancient Wisdom of Zarathushtra*. Rockport, MA: Element Press, 1991.
- Mitchell, Donald W. *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*, Second Edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Narayanan, Vasudha. *Hinduism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*. San Francisco, CA: Harper SanFrancisco, 2002.
- Neusner, Jacob. *Neusner on Judaism*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004.

- Nigosian, S. A. *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.
- Novak, David. *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Oberoi, Harjot. *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Queen, Christopher S. and Sallie B. King, eds. *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Rambachan, Anantanand. *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2006.
- Said Reynolds, Gabriel. *The Emergence of Islam*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.
- Said Reynolds, Gabriel. *The Qur'ān and the Bible: Text and Commentary*. Yale University Press, 2018.
- Solomon, Norman. *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford, 1996.
- Tapper, Aaron J. Hahn. *Judaisms: A Twenty-First Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.
- Tobias, Michael. *Life Force: The World of Jainism*. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991.