

Call for Proposals for First-Year Seminar

First-year seminars will be distributed across the disciplines, yet they are structured around a set of common student learning outcomes whose purpose is to introduce first-year students to the pursuit of intellectual inquiry while developing some of the fundamental skills necessary for success in a rigorous academic setting: information literacy and strong written and oral communication skills. Specific topics are determined by the instructor's background and interests. The objective of the first-year seminar is to cultivate the intellectual skills necessary for liberal learning through the in-depth study of a topic and the provision of instruction on how to gather and analyze information for the purpose of formulating and defending an opinion. Seminars will be deep in terms of the critical approach employed, but will involve topics that are accessible to first-year students. In addition, first-year seminars anticipate the experience of the senior seminar without the requisite background knowledge and skills that such seminars demand.

All first-year seminars involve meaningful writing and speaking assignments in which students are given instruction and guidance on writing and speaking at the college level. Resources provided by the QEP are being used to enhance the services offered by the Speaking and Writing Center so that instructors can lean on these centers as they develop this portion of their course. Contact the Director of the Writing Center, Gwen Hale (ghale@umw.edu), or the Director of the Speaking Center, Anand Rao (arao@umw.edu), for assistance on how the centers can help you. Peter Catlin (pcatlin@umw.edu) of Simpson Library is also a valuable resource for providing instruction on information literacy and a robust introduction to library resources.

Every course should have the following basic components and use the new student learning outcomes.

First-year seminars will

- utilize active, discussion-based, participatory learning;
- be exploratory in nature, rather than just presenting conclusions;
- have students read primary sources, not simply textbooks;
- have students synthesize material from multiple sources to develop their own views on the topic; and
- be capped at 15 students.

Student Learning Outcomes (must be included on your syllabus!)

Upon successful completion of an FSEM, students will

- utilize a variety of research techniques to retrieve information efficiently, evaluate retrieved information, and synthesize information effectively to support their messages or arguments;
- improve development and organization of written arguments;
- demonstrate the ability to edit and revise in the writing process;
- apply the basic theories and principles of oral communication; and
- communicate effectively in a variety of settings, including public speaking and group discussion.

We are looking for seminars, not traditional courses, which illustrate the sort of intellectual inquiry higher education can offer. See, for instance, the sample syllabus appended to this document. In other words, you should not take an existing course and re-title and re-number it.

As we transition to all first-year students taking FSEM their first semester, instructors of FSEM should recognize that first-year advising will merge with the seminar program. FSEM instructors will be asked to devote a small portion of class time to advising issues and will be expected to meet their students individually for advising purposes. The Office of Academic and Career Services will be working with faculty in this endeavor and faculty will not be expected to develop advising materials. It is our hope that a collaborative program between first-year seminar instructors and the staff in the Academic and Career Services is a sound model for the academic component of the first-year experience.

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR COURSE PROPOSAL
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **FSEM 100 topics** courses for review **or** any **other existing course** that you wish to have designated to meet the first-year seminar requirement.

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| COURSE NUMBER: | FSEM 100 | | |
| COURSE TITLE: | THE GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGION | | |
| SUBMITTED BY: | Caitlin Finlayson | DATE: | 11 September 2014 |
| <i>This course proposal has the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i> | | | X |

COURSE DESCRIPTION. In the space below, provide a one- to two-sentence description of this class. The description will be entered in Banner and will also be used in other publications about the first-year seminar program (such as the “Eagle Essentials” booklet).

This course provides a geographic view of the world’s major religious traditions, examining the ways in which religion has shaped and has been shaped by the environment, culture, politics, and history. Class members survey and discuss the geographic context of the major religions in our world using a variety of primary sources and first-hand accounts, complete a project investigating the geography of a house of worship, and engage in their own geographic research.

RATIONALE. Include short statement addressing how this course meets the FSEM’s basic components and new student learning outcomes (see FSEM call above), and why this course should be approved to meet the FSEM General Education requirement.

This class seeks to fulfill the FSEM pedagogical goals of participatory and exploratory learning through the critical exploration of the world’s religions traditions from a geographic perspective. By exploring the historical and geographic context of these faiths, students are better able to think critically about the ways in which belief systems and ideologies influence and are influenced by particular cultural and physiographic landscapes. Students will serve as discussants, leading their classmates in a discussion of course readings covering the major religions found in our world. These readings will be supplemented with primary source material, which students will analyze to better understand the geographic elements found in religious writings. We will also watch several films which highlight the geographic landscape within which religions have emerged and continue to exert influence on. Students will finish the semester with a discussion of the award-winning novel, *The Kite Runner*, as a way to more fully appreciate cultural and religious diversity as well as religious conflict in the context of the Middle East. The readings selected will expose students to multiple religious ideologies and contexts, and in-class discussions will expose students to the care needed to effectively present information and lead classroom discussions. Each student will also complete an independent field trip paper and research paper, exposing students to the strategies needed to be an effective college-level researcher and writer. It is hoped that this course will help students better appreciate diverse perspectives and lead students on the path of self-discovery as they consider how their own belief system has been geographically situated.

SYLLABUS. *Attach a course syllabus.*

SUBMIT this form and attached syllabus **electronically as one document** to Dave Stahlman (wdstahlm@umw.edu). All submissions **must** be in electronic form.



Geography of Religion

FSEM 100 Fall 2015

Time: TBD

Location: TBD

Contact Information

Instructor: Caitie C. Finlayson, Ph.D.

Office: Monroe Hall 322

Email: cfinlay@umw.edu

Office Hours: Dates and times to be determined, or by appointment

Description

This course provides a geographic view of the world's major religious traditions. Where and when did these faiths arise? How have they affected history and been influenced by it? What role have they played in culture and civilization? We will examine their ancient birthplaces, diffusion, and global ranges in the 21st century. Emphasis will be given to the ways in which religion has shaped and has been shaped by the environment, culture, politics, and history. This course will provide a greater appreciation and understanding of the geography of religious traditions in our world.

Course Goals

This course satisfies the general education curriculum's **Freshman Seminar** requirement. This course strives to fulfill the FSEM pedagogical goals of participatory and exploratory learning through a group exploration of the geography of religion. Readings expose students to a broader understanding of the geographic context behind the major religions of our world. Presentations, written reports, and in-class discussions expose students to the skills needed to effectively communicate orally and in writing.

Upon successful completion of an FSEM, students will

- utilize a variety of research techniques to retrieve information efficiently, evaluate retrieved information, and synthesize information effectively to support their messages or arguments;
- improve development and organization of written arguments;
- demonstrate the ability to edit and revise in the writing process;
- apply the basic theories and principles of oral communication; and communicate effectively in a variety of settings, including public speaking and group discussion.

Required Materials

Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions (Plus)*. 50th Anniversary Edition. HarperOne. ISBN: 0061660183

Novak, Philip. *The World's Wisdom: Sacred Texts of the World's Religions*. HarperOne. ISBN: 0060663421

Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. Holt McDougal. ISBN: 159463193X

You will also be responsible for material from films and other assigned readings.

Lectures, reading, and study guides

You are responsible for material in lecture, text, films, and any other supplementary materials. Please do not ask me to make copies of the notes for you. You are responsible for retrieving any notes from classes that you have missed. In general, I will post the PowerPoint presentations from the lectures, but not lecture notes.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is not required; however it is strongly advised. For each class, you are expected to have completed all assignments and read all group readings assigned for that day in order to discuss them in class.

Students should come to class on time. Students who arrive to class more than 5 minutes late will not receive credit for any in-class assignments. If you have a work or other obligation and know you will be late to class, please contact me in advance and take a seat at the back of the class when you arrive in order to minimize disruption.

Make-ups and Late Work Policy

There will be **no make-up opportunities for in-class activities or other projects that contribute to your participation grade without a valid excuse**. If you miss an in-class assignment or activity and have a valid excuse (illness with doctor's note, etc.), you are expected to **contact a classmate** for the assignment instructions and turn in the missed assignment the next time you are in class. **Please do not contact me to find out what you missed in class**. Please note, travel for family events, work obligations, etc. are not considered to be valid excuses for missing class.

Late work will be accepted (and penalized) at my discretion. It is crucial that you advise me of any problems that will impede your ability to complete assignments on time.

Classroom Etiquette

In order to create an environment where students are able to interact and learn, our classroom is an **electronics free** zone, meaning no electronic devices whatsoever are allowed in class, to include cell phones, tablets, laptops and other electronic devices. These devices must be turned **OFF** (not on silent mode or vibrate) when in class. Text messaging is not allowed during class.

If you are expecting an important phone call you are to notify me during the beginning of the class. Additionally, because the subject of religion is often contentious, all students are asked to be respectful of other students' religious or irreligious views during class.

Canvas website and email

Please be sure that you have access to the course website on Canvas. You will need your UMW email account name and password to access this site. In Canvas, I can only send email to your UMW account. If you use a different account, it is your responsibility to set up your UMW account to forward to your preferred email.

Religious Days

If you wish to participate in religious day activities that interfere with scheduled class days or assignments, please inform me during the first week of class.

Assignments and Responsibilities

Evaluation for this course will be through:

- The student's role as a discussant, in-class participation, outlines and short assignments (50%)
- Individual field trip and report paper (20%)
- Research paper: outline and references (5%)
- Research paper (25%)

Grading Scale

A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (72-76), C- (70-71)
D+ (66-69), D (60-65), F (0-59)

Final Grades will follow the breakdown listed above and grades **will not be rounded**. That means that 89.9% earns a B+ even though it is just one point from an A. There has to be a cutoff at some point, and that means that some students barely make a grade, but others barely miss it. Do your best in ALL of your work so that you don't fall just short of your goal.

Student Discussants

All students **must** make a detailed outline for each of their weekly assigned readings. Many of our class meetings will involve a lecture and class discussion of assigned readings. Several students will serve as "discussants" who will be called upon to lead the discussion of one or more of the assigned readings. Discussants will not be pre-assigned, which means you should come to class each day assuming you will serve as a discussant.

Your role as a discussant is to:

- **Concisely** summarize the article or book chapter you are given;
- Draw connections between the assigned readings;
- Critically analyze the article or book chapter and pose discussion questions for the class;
- Serve as the leader in this discussion.

Your role as a discussant, in addition to your in-class participation, is the most important component of your final grade. Therefore, detailed outlines and notes made from your readings are strongly recommended, as they will facilitate fruitful discussions of the assigned readings. I will also periodically collect student outlines. **This will be unannounced so be prepared every time we meet.** Outlines and notes will also come in handy for your final research paper!

Individual Field Trip and Report Paper

The individual field trip and report paper will require you to visit a house of worship in Fredericksburg and the surrounding area that you have not visited previously and is not closely related to your own faith. You will then write a minimum of THREE pages about both the geography of the house of worship as well as your own experience. You will be provided with a more detailed description and set of instructions for this assignment.

Research Paper

The research paper is worth a total of 30% of your grade, with 5% for the outline and references, and 25% for the research paper itself. The paper should be 8-10 and represent scholarly research on the geography of a religious tradition of your choosing. You will be provided with a more detailed description and set of instructions for this assignment.

Honor Code Statement

The **Honor Code** will be followed, although students are expected to work together during in-class group activities and on the group assignment. Work that is written up and handed in for a grade should be your own; anything beyond general knowledge should be cited. **Please pledge your work accordingly.**

Disability Statement

The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University of Mary Washington as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodations. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and have reasonable accommodation needs, I will be happy to help you contact them. The office will require appropriate documentation of a disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266. The office is located in Lee Hall, Room 401.

Schedule

I will announce any changes to the schedule in class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to ask another student if changes have been made.

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I will announce any changes to the schedule in class. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to ask another student if changes have been made. Readings may be added or subtracted after the start of the term.

Readings in *italics* indicate the deadline for having read, outlined, and prepared a discussion for that section. Discussions of the material could take place at any time on or after that date.

Course Schedule

Week One

- August 25* Syllabus and Introduction
- August 27* *H. Smith Chapter 1: Point of Departure*
Introduction: What is the Geography of Religion?

Week Two

- September 1* *H. Smith Chapter 9: The Primal Religions*
The Development of Early Religious Traditions
- September 3* Early Religious Traditions

Week Three

- September 8* *H. Smith Chapter 2: Hinduism*
- September 10* **Discuss Field Trip and Report Paper**
Hinduism

Week Four

- September 15* *Chapter 3 in H. Smith: Buddhism*
- September 17* Buddhism

Week Five

- September 22* Buddhism – Movie: *Little Buddha*
- September 24* Finish Movie
Spotlight on Tibet

Week Six

September 29 *Chapter 4 in H. Smith: Confuciansim*

October 1 Confuciansim
Field Trip and Report Paper – DUE

Week Seven

October 6 *Chapter 5 in H. Smith: Taoism*

October 8 **Discuss Research Paper**
Taoism

Week Eight

October 13 **FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**

October 15 *Chapter 7 in H. Smith: Judaism*

Week Nine

October 20 Judaism – Movie: *Promises*

October 22 Judaism – Finish Movie: *Promises*

Week Ten

October 27 Judaism

October 29 *Chapter 8 in H. Smith: Christianity*

Week Eleven

November 3 **Research Paper Outline and References DUE**
Christianity

November 5 Christianity

Week Twelve

November 10 *Chapter 6 in H. Smith: Islam*

November 12 Islam

Week Thirteen

November 17 *Chapter 10 in H. Smith: A Final Examination*

November 19 Religion in the 21st Century

Week Fourteen

November 23-27 **Thanksgiving – No Class, SEDAAG Conference**
(Other classes might be meeting this week)

Week Fifteen

December 1 *The Kite Runner*

December 3 Spotlight on Religion and Conflict in Afghanistan

There will be no final exam for this course.

**Your research papers must be completed and turned in
by [TIME and DATE]**