

## RELS 101.01 Approaches to Religion: Death and Afterlife

(Spring 2016, MWF, 10:00-10:50 PM ECTR 116)



Dr. Lee Irwin, Religious Studies Department  
4-B Glebe Street, Room 201

E-Mail Address: [irwinl@cofc.edu](mailto:irwinl@cofc.edu) (send a message!)

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 11:00-12:30  
(Or by appointment)

### Course Description:

This course is a comparative introduction to religion organized around the theme of death, soul concepts, and a variety of beliefs about life after death. In terms of culture areas, the theme will be internationalized by looking at a variety of model cultures: ancient Mediterranean religions; Judaism and Christianity in Europe and America; Islam in the Middle East; Hinduism and Buddhism in India and Daoist and Confucian beliefs in China. The organization of the course starts with the culture areas and examine attitudes and religious beliefs in life after death among the religions of the world – this portion of the course will emphasize theories in comparative religions. In Christianity we will look at an esoteric Christian writer on sacred cosmology and in Buddhism we will discuss a book by a famous Tibetan Buddhist leader on after death processes. Toward the end of the course, we examine current research on life after death, in relation to a variety of studies linked to scientific investigation of post-mortem life independent of theories in religion or philosophy.

### Books (Required):

Archangel, Dianne. *Afterlife Encounters: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Experiences*. Hampton Road Publishing, 2005.

Dalai Lama, *Mind of Clear Light: Advice on Living Well and Dying Consciously*. Atria Books, 2004.

Moreman, Christopher M. *Beyond the Threshold: Afterlife Beliefs and Experiences in World Religions*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008.

Markides, Kyriacos C. *The Magus of Strovolos: The Extraordinary World of a Spiritual Healer*. Penguin Books, 1989.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):** This course meets the requirements for General Education Certification based on the following two SLO. Outcome 1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture. Outcome 2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments. These outcomes will be assessed in the final writing assignment (Paper #2, worth 15% of the final grade).

**Requirements:** Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions, failure to do so will result in a lower final grade (only three missed classes permitted). Requirements are as follows: four quizzes (15 minute each, 5% each = 20%), two short papers (3-4 pages, 15% + 15% = 30%), two full period exams (25% each = 50%). Assignments and tests are due on the day they are assigned. If you have a legitimate excuse, please talk to me before the scheduled assignment. Students must make up any missed assignments within one week (or receive an F); if you miss more than two assignments you will receive an automatic WF and be dropped from the course.

**Classroom Electronics:** Students must TURN OFF all electronic devices before class starts; you are not permitted to engage in texting or reading electronic mail (etc.) while class is in session. If you have a computer for taking notes, you must ONLY take notes (no jumping to read email or surf the web, unless requested). Any violation of this code will result in a deduction of points from your final grade average; repeated violations will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Honor Code:** Lying, cheating, and plagiarism (failure to cite sources used in a paper) are violations of the Honor Code. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating.

**Center for Student Learning** offers academic support services for assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

**Disabilities:** If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. Please discuss with me any special needs you may have. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm>

**Grading Scale:** Numerical/letter grades: A+ = 100-97; A = 96-93; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-67; D = 66-63; D- = 62-60; F = 59 or lower.

**Reading Assignments:** Readings are assigned per week. Please do the readings by the due date, that way you will be prepared for the lecture and discussion.

I. **Week One: January 8**, Religion, Afterlife, and Contemporary Research

A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 1-8; Arcangel, pp. 1-15

II. **Week Two: January 11, 13, 15**

A. Reading Assignment: Arcangel, pp. 17-64

B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 11-34 Ancient Near East and Greco-Roman

C. Moreman, pp. 35-42 Afterlife in Judaism

III. **Week Three: January 20, 22 (No Class Jan 18 MLK Day)**

A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 42-51 Afterlife in Judaism

B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 77-96 Afterlife in Islam

C. **Grade Assignment: QUIZ ONE, January 22**

**IV. Week Four: January 25, 27, 29**

- A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 53-63 Afterlife in Christianity
- B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 64-75 Afterlife in Christianity
- C. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 1-46 Afterlife in Esoteric Christianity

**V. Week Five: February 1, 3, 5** (Pass out Paper One assignment)

- A. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 47-87 Afterlife in Esoteric Christianity
- B. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 88-111 Afterlife in Esoteric Christianity
- C. **Grade Assignment: QUIZ TWO, February 5**

**VI. Week Six: February 8, 10, 12** (Pass out Study Guide, Exam One)

- A. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 122-144 Afterlife in Esoteric Christianity
- B. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 145-170 Afterlife in Esoteric Christianity
- C. **Grading Assignment: PAPER ONE DUE, February 10**

**VII. Week Seven: February 15, 17, 19**

- A. Reading Assignment: Markides, pp. 170-209 Afterlife in Esoteric Christianity
- B. **Grade Assignment: EXAM ONE: February 17 (Through Christianity)**
- C. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 97-107 Afterlife in Hinduism

**VIII. Week Eight: February 22, 24, 26**

- A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 107-116 Afterlife in Hinduism
- B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 117-127 Afterlife in Buddhism
- C. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 128-137 Afterlife in Buddhism

**IX. Week Nine: February 29, March 2, 4**

- A. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 9-35 Tibetan Buddhism
- B. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 39-55
- C. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 56-78, 209-215 Tibetan Buddhism

**!!! SPRING BREAK !!! (March 1-8)**

**X. Week Ten: March 14, 16, 18**

- A. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 79-115 Tibetan Buddhism
- B. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 117-158 Tibetan Buddhism
- C. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 217-229 Tibetan Buddhism
- D. **Grade Assignment: QUIZ THREE, March 18**

**XI. Week Eleven: March 21, 23, 25**

- A. Reading Assignment: Dalai Lama, pp. 159-207, 229-237 Tibetan Buddhism
- B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 139-149 Chinese Afterlife
- C. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 149-158 Chinese Afterlife

**XII. Week Twelve: March 28, 30, April 1**

- A. Reading Assignment: Arcangel, pp. 65-114 Contemporary Research
- B. **Grading Assignment: QUIZ FOUR, March 30**
- C. Reading Assignment: Arcangel, pp. 171-201 Contemporary Research

**XIII. Week Thirteen: April 4, 6, 8** (Pass out SLO Paper #2 assignment)

- A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, 161-182 Mediumship and Apparitions
- B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, 183-192 Mediumship and Apparitions
- C. Reading Assignment: Moreman, 193-206 Mediumship and Apparitions

**XIV. Week Fourteen: April 11, 13, 15**

- A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 207-226 Near Death and OBE Experiences
- B. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 227-236 Near Death and OBE Experiences
- C. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 237-241 Past Life Memories

**XV. Week Fifteen: April 18, 20** (Pass out Study Guide)

- A. Reading Assignment: Moreman, pp. 245-255, 269-280, Conclusions
- B. Grade Assignment: FINAL SLO PAPER DUE, April 20**

**XVI. Week Sixteen: Monday April 25, FINAL EXAM**

- A. Exam will cover from Hinduism to end of course
- B. Exam will be from 8:30 – 10:30 AM, ECTR 116** (usual room)

Part I - Death and Afterlife in Nonliterate and Ancient Religions 1. 1 - Living with Spirits: Death and Afterlife in African Religions 3. 2 - The Fate of Mankind: Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia 19. 3 - Taking It with You: the Problem of Death and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt 35.Â Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics By Darrell J. Fasching; Dell Dechant; David M. Lantigua Wiley Blackwell, 2011. Read preview Overview. The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography By Donald S. Lopez Jr Princeton University Press, 2011. after death and their level of death anxiety, but this finding was not statistically significant. Other studies also indicate that belief in an afterlife tends to have a moderating effect on. death anxiety, but the results are not definitive (Aday, 1984â€“1985; Alvarado et al., 1995; Thorson, 1991).Â and death depression to religion and civilian war-related experiences in Iranians. Omega: Journal of Death. and Dying, 38, 201â€“210.