I am Ross Enochs and I will be the instructor for the online course World Religions. I thought it might be helpful if I included a brief biography to let you know about my experience in religion. I graduated from Colgate University in New York with a B.A. in Religious Studies in 1985. I then went on to graduate work at the University of Virginia where I received my M.A. and Ph. D. in Religious Studies with a concentration in American Religious History. I taught part-time at Boston College, Merrimack College, and Marian College of Fond du Lac. From 1999 until 2022, I was an assistant professor at Marist College in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. I am now semi-retired and am teaching as a part-time instructor. At Marist I have taught a variety of courses including Marriage and the Family from Religious Perspectives, Religion in America, Catholic Thought and Spirituality, Judeo-Christian Scripture, Muslim and Christian Identities and others. I am Roman Catholic.

The first thing you need to do is to buy the books that are listed on the syllabus. You will also need access to a Bible for this class but you do not need a hard copy. There are several different versions of the Bible and you can use any version. If you have a Hebrew Bible, you will need a New Testament as well. There are copies of the Bible available on the internet so if you do not have a hard copy, you can go online. *The New American Bible* (a Catholic Bible) and the NRSV Newly Revised Standard Version (a Protestant Bible) are both available online and I have links on the syllabus to these books. You will need a *Bhagavad Gita* but you do not have to buy the one that I have listed on the syllabus – you can buy any translation that you like or use an online translation.

Each week your post for the discussions is due Sunday night by 8:00 PM. You only have to post once each week. Some weeks, there will be several topics for discussion. Even though there are several different topics, you do not have to post in all the topics. Each week, you only have to post in one topic - any topic that you like.

This is not an easy class. In this class we will be learning to analyze religious phenomena. One of the great problems with regard to religion today is that most people think that they understand religion. Most people have the comfortable confidence that they have figured out everything about religion. The problem with this assertion is that very few people study religion, and unless you spend some time studying religion, you really do not understand it. Today people spend far more time on the internet or cell phone than they would ever commit to the study or practice of religion. When you graduate from college, most of you will have very little free time to study religion; new jobs, new friends, dating, marriage, new houses will most likely push religion out of your immediate interest. We have eight weeks, so you might as well commit some time to it now. I promise you, there will be some surprises for all of you.

When I was young I was very interested in Zen Buddhism and so I took a college course on Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The course really surprised me because Buddhism in Sri Lanka was very different from Zen Buddhism and I was really disappointed with the course. The reason why I was disappointed was that I naively figured that Buddhism would be pretty much the same in all the countries that it is practiced. Actually, there are many different types of Buddhism – Theravada Buddhism, Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, Nichiren Buddhism and others. I am not here to tell you which of these is the “true” form of Buddhism since the devotees of each sect think their sect is the true one; similarly, Mennonites, Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and Greek Orthodox Christians all think their

denomination is the "true" one. Sunni Muslims think their branch of Islam is the true faith, and so do Shiite Muslims. I am just here to explain some of the different beliefs of these religions and denominations. Since religion has had such a large impact on the history of the world and also on how people live their lives today, you should know the central beliefs of these religions and the beliefs and practices of the larger denominations.

I hope you enjoy the course and I hope you find it challenging,

Best wishes,

Ross Enochs

If you need to contact me you can email me at ross.enochs@marist.edu

Required Texts: You need to buy the hard copy the following three books

Hinduism: A Cultural Perspective **by David Kinsley. ISBN** 0133957322 **(Click on used to get it at a reduced price) https://www.amazon.com/Hinduism-Cultural-Perspective-David-Kinsley/dp/0133957322/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1DD7OAN1U8LFA&keywords=hinduism+kinsley&qid=1692475596&sprefix=hinduism+kinsley%2Caps%2C120&sr=8-1&ufe=app_do%3Aamzn1.fos.006c50ae-5d4c-4777-9bc0-4513d670b6bc**

What the Buddha Taught **by Walpola Rahula ISBN https://www.amazon.com/What-Buddha-Taught-Expanded-Dhammapada/dp/0802130313/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2XNZYWKGUMB7U&keywords=what+the+buddha+taught+by+walpola+rahula&qid=1692475497&sprefix=walpola+rahula+%2Caps%2C112&sr=8-1**

Understanding Islam **by Thomas Lippman. ISBN https://www.amazon.com/Understanding-Islam-Introduction-Muslim-World/dp/0451620798/ref=sr_1_1?crid=5IXM5CUBOR7F&keywords=understanding+islam+lippman&qid=1692475415&sprefix=understanding+islam+lippman%2Caps%2C122&sr=8-1**

You will also need a Bible and the Bhagavad Gita. You can use online translations of these two books

The Bible **- Any version of the Bible with the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament is fine; you can also find the Bible online if you do not want to buy a hard copy.** ***The New American Bible http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/index.shtml,*** **a Catholic Bible, and the** ***NRSV New Revised Standard Version*****, http://www.godweb.org/nrs/index2.htm, a Protestant Bible, are both available online.**

Bhagavad-Gita **translated by Barbara Stoler Miller (or you can use any translation of the Bhagavad-Gita that you like) https://www.amazon.com/Bhagavad-Gita-Krishnas-Counsel-Time-War/dp/0965064758/ref=sr_1_1?crid=20W26D3R9KO5C&keywords=bhagavad+gita+barbara+stoler+miller&qid=1692475541&sprefix=bhagavad+gita+barbara%2Caps%2C114&sr=8-1**

or you can use the online text https://vedabase.io/en/library/bg/

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