



RELI 10043 UNDERSTANDING RELIGION | LIFE WORTH LIVING

COURSE & INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Course

RELI 10043 010 Understanding Religion | Society & Culture | Life Worth Living

Semester and Year: Spring 2026

Number of Credits: 3

Course Component Type: LEC

Class Meeting Day & Time: MWF 9:00 – 9:50 a.m.

Instructor

Instructor Name: Tish Duncan

Office Hours: MWF 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Preferred Method of Contact: email

Response Time: 24 hours



Final Evaluative Exercise

Final Evaluative Exercise Day & Time:

Wednesday, May 6, 2026, 8:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Note for students: The syllabus is your first course reading. It provides an orientation to the flow and expectations of the course. You should turn to the syllabus for details on assignments and course policies.

Student Resources & Policy Information

Click or scan QR code for resources to support you as a TCU student.

Please note section on [Student Access and Accommodation](#), [Academic Conduct & Course Materials Policies](#), and [Emergency Response & TCU Alert](#).



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description

This course introduces students to the vital role of religion in human experience. Through case studies, readings, lectures, and multimedia demonstrations, students will learn about the various relations between religion, culture, and society.

Section Description

What does it mean to live well? What is worth wanting and pursuing? What can lend meaning to this mortal life we live? This course is designed to provide a laboratory for considering a variety of possible answers to questions as fundamental and important as these. In preparation for class sessions, participants will read a selection of classic and contemporary texts from a variety of religious and philosophical traditions, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Stoicism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In class, participants will join in dialogue aimed at *understanding* and *evaluating* claims and perspectives encountered in the readings. The culminating assignment of the semester will ask students to describe their own present understanding of what matters most and what constitutes a life worth living.

Prerequisites & Concurrent Enrollment

There are no prerequisites.

Program & Major Connections

This course may be used to satisfy the Religious Traditions or Humanities requirement in the core curriculum.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Materials

All readings for the course are contained within the course packet, which will be made available in two parts and is to be purchased at TCU Printing & Copying, 2865 W. Bowie. Estimated cost is approximately \$30 total. PLEASE DO NOT GO TO PURCHASE YOUR PACKET UNTIL YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME THAT IT IS READY!

Supplementary Resources

Many supplementary resources for this course (podcasts, videos, and essays) may be found at <https://lifeworthliving.yale.edu/>

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY & METHODOLOGY

I strive to create a classroom environment that is both inclusive and empowering, where every student feels valued and supported. In a way, the real teachers of this course are



the voices that we will together encounter in classic texts from our shared human history. In this sense, I will be travelling alongside you as a fellow student. To encounter these literary voices in more than a superficial way, we will need to read mindfully; and to facilitate this, I have provided you with an assessment framework that encourages the practice and strengthening of deep reading skills. One of my greatest hopes for you is that you will be life-long readers of the kinds of books that can guide, shape, and sustain a life worth living.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Core Curriculum Religious Traditions (RT)

Examine the role of religion in society, culture, and individual life

Core Curriculum Humanities (HUM)

Use humanistic modes of inquiry to analyze human experiences and expressions across space and time

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignments

Reading Discipline

A key part of the work for this course is the development of a discipline for the mindful reading of assigned primary and secondary texts. This dedicated practice is the bedrock that supports all the course learning outcomes. All readings listed in the schedule at the end of the syllabus can be found in the course packet.

Points for the reading discipline will be assessed on the basis of Reading Reports (found under Quizzes on D2L) that are due on the days indicated on the course schedule, by the start of class. From time to time, I may conduct unannounced, in-class assessments to verify that reading is being done and reported with integrity. On those occasions, I will assign the points for the particular reading assignment based on my evaluation of the in-class assessment rather than relying on your self-report. If a student has an excused absence when an in-class assessment is conducted, they may make up the assessment in person (during office hours or at an otherwise scheduled time) within one week of returning to class (contact me promptly to schedule the make-up assessment).



Dishonest reporting of reading, if discovered, will result *at minimum* in a zero for the the reading points for the week. If I feel that it is warranted, I will also refer the case to the Dean of the College for further review in accordance with TCU's Academic Misconduct Policy (see Student Resources & Policy Information above).

Midterm and Final Evaluative Exercise

The midterm exam will assess your recall and comprehension of learning about the major religious and philosophical traditions engaged in this course. The midterm exam will be taken in class on Friday, March 13. The Final Evaluative Exercise will be conducted on Wednesday, May 6, 8:00-10:30 a.m.

Final Essay

There is no final exam, but each student will write a final essay of 1000-1200 words describing the student's present understanding of a life worth living. A detailed description of the essay will be distributed and posted on D2L.

Grading Policy

Grades and attendance will be updated on a weekly basis on TCU Online so that students can keep track their progress at all times. If you have questions about the accuracy of your grade or attendance record at any time, please inquire without delay so that we can look into the matter in a timely manner.

Late Work Policy

Assignments and Reading Reports submitted late but within 24 hours of the deadline will receive a penalty of 20%. After 24 hours and up to one week later, reports will receive a 50% penalty. Assignments or Reading Reports that are more than one week late are no longer eligible for credit.

Attendance Policy

The University Attendance Policy stipulates that regular and punctual class attendance is essential and that no assigned work is summarily excused because of absence. I, too, regard your faithful attendance and engaged presence to be an indispensable component of successful completion of this course. If you need to be absent for a good reason (a TCU-sponsored extracurricular activity, an illness, a major family event, etc.), please notify me before the absence so that I can mark your absence as "excused." Dean of Students via the TCU Dean of Students website.



You are allowed three *unexcused* absences with no penalty to your grade; you do not need to share with me the reason for your absence or request permission (though you may reach out, out of courtesy). However, upon the fourth unexcused absence, five points (= 5% of the overall course grade) will be deducted from your Attendance and Classroom Engagement score. Upon the fifth unexcused absence, another five points (another 5% of the overall course grade) will be deducted.

Medical Privacy Statement

Because it is considered an infringement on student privacy for me to have access to student medical records, I cannot accept medical documentation to justify absences. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence and want to provide verification, please access the Absence Documentation Form on the TCU Dean of Students website.

Classroom Engagement

Good classroom engagement is marked especially by alert and respectful attention in class and by staying on task when working in small groups. Verbal participation in large-group discussions is strongly encouraged, but it is not required for full credit in Classroom Engagement.

Problematic classroom engagement is marked by drowsiness, distraction by electronic devices (which are generally not permitted in this class), or other off-task behaviors (such as failing to participate in group activities or taking small-group conversation off-task). Your grade will not suffer on the grounds of classroom engagement without prior notification from me (via email or in person). In other words, you can feel confident that you're doing fine and have not lost any Classroom Engagement points unless you hear from me. If I do reach out to you, it will be to make you aware of the problem and to encourage you to correct the behavior before a grade deduction is warranted. If problems persist

beyond that initial conversation or email, I will deduct five points (=5% of the overall course grade) from the Attendance & Classroom Engagement category each time a follow-up conversation or email is merited. Upon the third such follow-up email or conversation with any given student, I will also report the matter to the Dean of Students.



Course Assignments & Final Grade

Assignments & Associated Learning Outcomes	Points
Reading Discipline (RT, HUM)	20.25 points (.81 points per reading assignment)
Attendance	10
Classroom Engagement	10
Midterm Exam (RT)	28
Final Essay Draft	3
Final Essay (RT, HUM)	24
Final Evaluative Exercise	4.75
Total	100

Grading Scale

A	93–100	C	74–76.99
A-	90–92.99	C-	70–73.99
B+	87–89.99	D+	67–69.99

B	84–86.99	D	64–66.99
B-	80–83.99	D-	60–63.99
C+	77–79.99	F	0–59.99

Course Policies

AI Policy

Artificial intelligence (AI) and other unapproved assignment-help tools MAY NOT be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. Specific examples of prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:

- Using AI tools or online searches to create or access summaries of reading materials rather than reading the course materials for yourself
- Using AI to overhear and summarize class discussions
- Submitting all or any part of an assignment prompt or question to an AI or unapproved assignment-help tool
- Incorporating any part of an AI-generated response into an assignment or exam

If you are in doubt as to what constitutes AI, or whether a tech-based tool is suitable for use in this class, it is your responsibility to discuss your situation with the instructor.

Laptops, Phones, and other Electronic Devices in the Classroom

A primary aim of the design of this course is to help you connect with and reflect upon your own IRL experience, in genuine community with others. For this reason, I ask that all electronic devices and distractions be silenced and stowed away for the duration of class, except for the times when I will invite you to use your phones for specific tasks. If you feel that this policy will seriously disadvantage your learning, I invite you to have a conversation with me outside of class during the first week of the semester. I encourage you to think about the classroom as a space of freedom from the tyranny of the attention economy. Try to enjoy the time away from screens to be fully present to the social and intellectual community we can cultivate together.

